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THE NEW
STATESMAN AND NATION
The Week-end Review

Vol. XXIII. No. 572. [Incorporating THE ATHENÆUM] SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1942 [Registered at the G.P.O. as a newspaper] SIXPENCE

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WAR ON THREE FRONTS

SINGAPORE is besieged: the Burma road is imperilled: Rommel is rapidly recovering Cyrenaica: and the Russians continue to advance. No German excuses disguise their discomfiture. It seems true, however, that their defence is now partly carried on by second-line troops withdrawn from Western Europe and even by satellite auxiliaries. These relatively inferior forces are everywhere falling back. The inference is that Hitler has sent his best shock troops to the rear, including the Panzer Divisions and Luftwaffe, to rest and refit. Their turn will come again in May when a spring offensive should begin. The Russians should, meanwhile, by a series of wide pincer movements, advance to a line that may run through Smolensk and Dnieprpetrovsk, both of them vital centres of road and railway transport. In the North Leningrad breathes freely again. In the South the critical question is whether the Crimea can be freed, since the chief German objective in the spring must again be the roads that lead to the Caucasian oilfields. Presumably the Russians are also building up their reserves for the spring. The number and quality of the tanks we send them may decide that campaign.

Round this matter of tanks revolve our own fortunes in Libya. Rommel has swept us out of Benghazi and far beyond it (1) because he was reinforced by sea; (2) because he can repair his damaged tanks in the field; and (3) because his tanks are superior to ours. Our forces were (1) originally inferior in numbers to his and do not seem to have been reinforced; it looks (2) as if we were no better able to refit an injured tank in the field than we were in the last campaign; (3) finally, the guns of our tanks, to say nothing of other defects, are inferior in calibre and range to those of the Germans. The bravery of our men cannot compensate for such defects. The mismanagement of this campaign ought to lead to a searching enquiry into its causes. Are we even now attending to the business of refitting tanks at the front; and to the improvement of their armament and the modification of their types? It seems that Lord Beaverbrook has concentrated on quantity to the neglect of quality.

The attacks of the Japanese on Rabaul, Celebes, Amboyna, and at length Java, give the clue to their strategy. Their purpose is to secure the sea-roads among these islands, which lead into the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal. It is unlikely that they contemplate an invasion of Australia, because they must husband their considerable but still limited man-power; and even more their shipping. By securing the islands they gain freedom of movement for themselves, deprive the Allies of bases, and ensure eventually their own supplies of strategic raw materials. It is vital to them to capture (1) Singapore; (2) the Dutch naval base of Surabaya; and (3) Rangoon. It is questionable whether the War Cabinet took the right decision in reinforcing Singapore to placate Australia. With weak fighter defence in the air and a doubtful water supply, it is a perfect target for bombers. To hold Burma is surely more important, for if its famous road should be lost, China is isolated and her share in the eventual destruction of Japan's land forces seriously compromised. The loss of the Burmese port of Moulmein is a grave symptom of our weakness here, nor does it seem that we are holding the Salween river. In their own interests the Japanese may aim first of all at occupying Burma. The Germans, on the other hand, are urging that they should spread out among the small islands of the Indian Ocean. The plan has been outlined from Berlin in the Spanish official *Arriba*. If the Japanese Navy could secure some of these islands, it would imperil our Cape route and bottle up our forces in the Mediterranean. This ugly prospect, distant though it may be, emphasises the importance of the Libyan campaign. If we could take Tripoli and command the Sicilian Channel, the Western entry into the Mediterranean would again be open to us. The best news from this part of the world is that the American Navy has taken the offensive in the Marshall and Gilbert Islands.

The manifest danger to India prompted Lord Faringdon's powerful appeal in the Lords for prompt political action. We hope that his plan for realising self-government has the full backing of the Labour Party. If so, may we hope for even more effective pressure? The debate was made notable by the support which Lord Hailey with his long experience gave to the call for action. The stand-pat reply which came from the Duke of Devonshire was the ideal expression of Die-hard tactics. He threw the entire responsibility on Indians for their failure to achieve unanimity. The same attitude in Ireland, when Ulster and Sinn Fein would not come to terms, produced the results we all remember too well. The Duke did, however, admit at the end of his speech that lack of agreement in India did not rule out all British initiative. Mr. Joshi's motion in the Central Assembly for February 12th, calling upon the Viceroy to take immediate steps to set up a responsible National Government, would be the very opportunity desired by a wise British Administration. But in this matter Mr. Churchill has never been wise.

Ethiopia Renewed

Though no State without a full equipment of modern arms can be fully independent in the post-war world, we see no reason to doubt Mr. Eden's statement in the House of Commons or Mr. Law's assurances on the wireless about the nature of the new agreement that has at last been reached between this country and the Emperor of Ethiopia. The agreement reads like a victory for the more progressive school of thought. We are to use Ethiopia as a military base for the war, without charge, while we are granting a sum, diminishing yearly, to set the country's finances in order. The Italians are to be evacuated, which is only prudent, seeing the wrongs the Ethiopians have suffered at their hands. The British representative is to be a Minister, not a Commissioner, and the British advisers are to be employed as servants to the Emperor as administrators, police, and in a mixed court of judicial appeal. We would like to have seen an American among these foreign advisers, but we note Mr. Eden's protestation that after the war there will be nothing to prevent the Emperor of Ethiopia engaging the advice of other nationalities. With past experience to go on, Africans will be suspicious of the white man's aid, but that, in the circumstances, is both inevitable and desirable. The test will be in the kind of men chosen to help the Emperor. The prevalent philosophy in South Africa makes the South Africans suspect, and no settlers or adventurers of the type which usually seeks employment in these areas should be accepted. For Africans this emancipation of an African kingdom is of immense importance, both as an earnest of Allied honour and as a symbol of the future of their race.

Home Front (*by an Industrial Correspondent*)

At long last the Trade Unions appear to be waking up to the importance of workshop organisation. The Trades Union Congress has itself formulated a plan for the establishment of workshop committees in all war factories of substantial size, and this plan is said to have been put before the Cabinet by Mr. Bevin with a view to the making compulsory of some sort of joint committee system in all establishments working for the State. It was high time for this to happen. Of course, even without much official Trade Union support the shop stewards' movement has spread very rapidly during recent months. But there are not only many firms which still refuse to deal with the shop stewards, or at all events to recognise any general works organisation representing stewards from different trades and departments, but also many factories in which a shop stewards' movement either does not exist or, if it does, is run by a minority of the workers on an unrepresentative basis. The Communists have very naturally been prompt to seize on the chance of putting their men at the head of the movement; and as they have been of recent months the most enthusiastic advocates of higher production, the immediate results have often been good. This Communist leadership has, however, where it exists, the double disadvantage of causing some sections of the men in the workshops to refuse their collaboration, and of making the Trade Union leaders highly suspicious of what is being done. Presumably, the T.U.C.'s new move has two aspects. On the one hand, it is an attempt to compel anti-trade-union firms to grant the recognition which they have hitherto refused; and on the other hand it is an attempt to wrest the leadership of the workshop movement from the Communists, and to bring it back into closer relation to the official Trade Union machine.

A "NEW STATESMAN" PAMPHLET

Production : A Plan for War Industry, is a 32-page pamphlet, price 6*d.*, available on February 14th. The author, who calls himself Hephaestus Smith, is a very well-known expert in close contact with what is happening in the factories and workshops to-day. He takes up Lord Beaverbrook's challenge to produce a reasoned argument to show that production will be improved by a structural change in the organisation of the war industries. The pamphlet is published at the moment when Lord Beaverbrook has himself been appointed Minister of Production.

Owing to the shortage of paper, the edition of this pamphlet is restricted. It will be wise to place an order now.

* * *

The danger, of course, is that in officialising the movement and making workshop machinery compulsory, the Trade Unions may destroy its spontaneity. But this danger has to be faced if the Trade Unions are not to run into another, which faced them similarly during the last war—that of losing their hold over the workers by failing to represent them adequately in the handling of wartime problems. In times of peace the main problems of "industrial relations" are those of standard wages, hours, and conditions of work, which can be largely dealt with either nationally, or over whole districts covered by uniform agreements. But wartime problems assume much more a character peculiar to each establishment; and this is most of all the case when the main grievances come to be matters, not of personal self-interest, but of the failure of management to make the best use of labour in the interest of the whole community. These problems of production are essentially "factory" or "workshop" problems; and most of the Trade Unions are almost wholly unequipped with the means of dealing with them.

* * *

When is the Government going to decide *anything* that will make projects of post-war reconstruction more than empty talk? Two things, at any rate, must be decided before even the first sketch of any practicable plans can be drawn. One is, what Ministries are to do what, and above all, what Ministry is to have the general control of physical planning and building, including not only housing but also such factors as the location of industry and the creation of new towns or trading estates. The second is, What is to be the scale of the post-war building industry? This is no less urgent, because builders take time to train, and plans for training them time to work out and get into order. How many builders are we to set out to train? No one knows: no one can know, until the Cabinet has made some decision about the scale on which post-war building is to be allowed to proceed. And presumably this will not be settled until the Government has made up its mind what sort of planning machinery to set up. Is Lord Reith supposed to be tackling these jobs, or isn't he?

Rubber

The B.B.C.'s report on Parliament last Tuesday, unusually fair and full in other respects, quite failed to convey the importance of the discussion on rubber control, raised on the adjournment by Mr. John Parker. An effort was made by experts to ride off on technicalities, and no satisfactory explanation was given for the failure in this country to develop on a large scale well-known processes for reclaiming rubber and re-treading tyres. This is all the more strange since the Government knew that we were in grave danger of losing our supplies in the Pacific, and that while Germany, Russia and the U.S.A. had developed the synthetic article we were in this respect also far behind. The underlying issue of the debate was the nature of the "Controls," which in rubber, as in other things, have meant that the vital decisions have been in the hands of executives taken from the great combines, to whose interest it has never been to think in terms of maximum production irrespective of its effects on profits or the future position of the private firm.

EUROPE'S POWER PATTERN

Gradually among exiled governments in London the pattern of a future Europe is taking shape, while the Russian armies struggle westwards through the snows. The Poles and Czechs have now done what the Greeks and Jugoslavs did the previous week; each pair of governments has issued the text of a treaty which outlines a plan of confederation. Neither group is closed or finally constituted. In the south the royal governments of Greece and Jugoslavia hope that their union will lead, after the war, to the formation of a Balkan Confederacy, including under new régimes the Bulgars, Roumanians and presumably the Albanians. In North and Central Europe the outlook is rather more misty. It is probable—indeed, all but certain—that the Austrians will not wish to be linked even with a democratic Germany. It is to be hoped that Hungary will undergo a democratic, which must also be in her case an agrarian, revolution. But Austria in isolation can have no satisfactory future. Is it contemplated, then, that Austria and Hungary will join Czechoslovakia and Poland to form a powerful North-Central Confederacy? In that event a wide belt of buffer States, grouped in two separate confederacies, would stretch from the Baltic to the Adriatic and Aegean Seas, separating the Soviet Union from Western Europe and Germany. Both would be mainly agricultural, though Czechs, Poles and Austrians have considerable industrial resources. Neither confederacy, if they should reach their fuller extension, would be in character Slav, though each would contain a powerful Slav element. At a first glance this arrangement does not impress the spectator as inevitable.

What is its guiding idea? The sketches of the constitutions proposed for the two nuclear confederations, which are closely similar, suggest that they are to serve two purposes, military and economic. There is, in the proper sense of the word, no union. There is no common citizenship; each federated State continues to conduct its own foreign policy; the armies are not fully welded into one. What is proposed is rather the close co-ordination of policies through habitual consultations between ministers: parliamentary delegations may also confer but without exercising legislative powers. The armies will have a common staff and standardised equipment. A Customs Union is contemplated and close co-ordination of the transport services. The arrangement is, in short, much more than an alliance but very much less than a federation.

The first difficulty, to our thinking, is that this plan goes no great way towards breaking down the nationalism and particularism of these States. Four or five Balkan States, of unequal area and population, would meet and bargain and confer, but always as solid, sovereign national units. In a true federation, on the other hand, parties based on identity of outlook would come

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together across the lines of nationality—peasants, socialists, communists, liberals and the rest. In a decade, or less, the old national rivalries would be forgotten. From the military standpoint undoubtedly a common staff and standardised equipment would be a great gain. But the Balkan Confederacy would be no better able than are its component States to-day to provide itself with the essentials of modern warfare; it would have to depend on outside aid from some Great Power or Powers. Its independence, in short, would be illusory. The North-Central Confederacy would be much stronger, but would even it quite attain in this respect the stature of a Great Power that could stand alone? Finally, economic union could do little for the Balkan States, since their trade must always be mainly with the markets and industries of the Centre and West. The North-Central Confederacy would show a rather better internal economic balance.

It is, however, too early to treat these schemes as anything more than suggestions. If the Russians realise their hope of beating Germany before the end of this year, their prestige and their leadership will be decisive in Eastern and Central Europe at least. The future of the Balkans will be decided not by exiled courts in London, but by the peasant armies still fighting with steadfast courage in the mountainous interior. It is the wish of the Russians to erect a big (which would not on that account necessarily be strong) Poland as a buffer between the Germans and themselves. It should not be assumed that they will wish to regard the Balkan Peninsula as a buffer outside their range of influence. But we are sceptical about the old-world conceptions of a balance of power which inspire all these arrangements, sketched by conservative exiles in conservative London. The Europe that emerges after it has shaken off the German yoke will not be the Europe whose divisions and corruptions invited the Nazi attack. It may achieve a revolutionary fraternity and dismiss these timid variations of the old pattern of nationalism and sovereignty, in order to advance towards a wider union of peoples.

THE NEW MINISTER OF PRODUCTION

LORD BEAVERBROOK is the new Minister of Production; but it is still uncertain what powers he is to possess. And that is the crux. Some say that the job was offered, with inadequate powers, to Mr. Bevin. It is much clearer that the Ministry of Supply, now once more entrusted to Sir Andrew Duncan, had been offered to Sir Stafford Cripps, who is also said to have refused because the powers attached to the office were too small. This latter offer seems to imply that the Ministry of Supply is not to be merged into the Ministry of Production, but is to continue side by side with it; and the reported ground of refusal suggests at first sight that the Ministry of Production is to be endowed with powers which will reduce the Supply Ministry to a subordinate role. But this may not be the true interpretation; for there is another, no less plausible in view of the characters of the principal actors. May it not be that both Mr. Bevin and Sir Stafford Cripps asked the same question of Mr. Churchill, and received the same discouraging answer? Would they, if in their several proposed offices they became convinced that any important sector of the war economy ought to be socialised, or brought under really complete public operation for the period of the war—would they, in that event, get the backing of the War Cabinet in carrying through the necessary changes, even against the opposition of big business and of a large section of the Conservative Party?

May not this, very probably, be the obstacle which has held up the appointments believed to have been practically settled last week? After all, the reason why we at any rate have wanted a Minister of Production with wide powers has always been mainly that we have believed the present system of control over war industry to be rotten at the core, and have felt sure that it could not be put right except by a Minister armed with much more than ordinary departmental authority. The mere existence of a Minister of Production is nothing in itself: everything depends on what such a Minister *does*—and is allowed to do. At the least, we need a Minister powerful and determined enough to shake off the dominance of the "Controls," officered and run by the very interests they are supposed to control, which have reduced a full half of the nominal authority of the Ministry of Supply to a farce. Similarly, we need a Minister powerful and farseeing enough to decentralise production by basing it in each area on a comprehensive regional plan for the use of all the local resources—a change which cannot be made except over the prostrate bodies of the big, nation-wide firms. For these firms claim the right to carve out their own economic principalities, as feudal manors were carved out in the Middle Ages, on a basis which ignores all questions of local or regional planning, or co-operation on a regional basis with firms outside their own financial groups. The top-heaviness and over-centralisation of the present methods of war production, and the corresponding failure, through lack of authority, of all attempts at regionalisation, are the direct outcome of the State having treated primarily with the feudal barons of industry, and allowed them to make their own terms, instead of formulating its own plans for the co-operative use of all the available resources, large and small, in each area.

If our new Minister of Production is merely to continue the past policy—to leave the "Controls" in possession of the key problems of raw material supply, and the big engineering and other war firms still in a position to wreck by their own claims to precedence any comprehensive planning of the production of finished war goods, the change will be of little benefit on the home front. It may indeed be that it is not intended to introduce any change into the organisation of our own war industries, but only to use the new Minister as an agent for closer co-operation between this country and the United States, where his "opposite number," Mr. Nelson, is also working with powers but shadowily defined. It may be that Mr. Churchill, even at the beginning of last week's debate, had already made up his mind to appoint such a Minister, as the outcome of his American talks, but held up the announcement in order to give it more the air of a concession to his critics. If that is so, it is very possible that the Ministry of Production we are to get will bear almost no resemblance to the kind of Ministry that has been repeatedly argued for in these columns—the kind for which one of our contributors will be putting forward, in a booklet we hope to publish next week, a fuller reasoned plea than is possible within the limits of an article. We are not belittling the importance of establishing the best possible machinery for close co-ordination between Great Britain and the United States in the production of war supplies; but neither are we glossing over the fact that the best possible co-ordination will not secure the deliveries unless the business of production is itself rightly organised.

Our need for more munitions is at this moment more plainly apparent to every observer than it has ever been. For lack of enough, and of the right, munitions we have allowed Rommel to get back on us in Libya, and for the same lack we have lost Malaya and are in a perilous plight even in Singapore. It is no doubt true that our total output has been rising fast, and that of many vital war goods we are producing much more than at the peak point of the last war. But how utterly astonishing it would be if we were not—when, in comparison with this war, the last was a war of infantry and not of mechanised units. Of course we are producing more: that is not in question. The question is, are we producing enough, or as much as we could, if we made short work of all vested interests which obstruct the best use of our resources?

If the new Minister is to be really a Minister of Production, he will need, not indeed to replace the Ministers of Supply and Aircraft Production, but greatly to reduce their powers—perhaps to the extent of making it desirable to combine them into a single department of design and inspection in close relation with the Service Ministries. A real Production Minister ought clearly to take over all the Controls, and the whole business of contract-making, leaving the Ministry of Supply and M.A.P. to stand rather for the "demand" of the Service departments than for the "supply" possibilities of industry. If that is to be the position, it is no wonder if Sir Stafford Cripps feels no eagerness to become Minister of Supply; for the remaining functions of the Ministry would then be mainly technical and not policy-making. If, on the other hand, the new Minister is to be not a real Minister of Production as we understand the term, but only a "Minister for the Co-ordination of Production"—Lord Caldicote over again, with knobs on—the Ministry of Supply will presumably continue to occupy a key position in the determination of economic policy. In that case, the vital question is whether whoever becomes Minister will have the will and the power, with the backing of the Cabinet, to destroy the existing Controls and the domination of big business in the realm of contracts, and to bring about a real and effective decentralisation of production, on the lines which we expounded in an article published by us only a few weeks ago.

A Minister of Production can mean many and very different things. Until we know what sort of Minister of Production we are to have we cannot know whether to congratulate Mr. Churchill on his ability to change his mind, or only on his adroitness in covering up the fact that it remains essentially unchanged. Soon Mr. Churchill is to tell us what powers the new Ministry is to have. For the present, we can only urge (1) that a Minister of Production is a totally different thing from a Minister for the Co-ordination of Production—as different as an engine from a fifth wheel; (2) that a real Minister of Production must have full power over the Controls and over the entire system of war contracts; and (3) that even a real Minister armed with the necessary powers will not be able to bring about much improvement in our economic effort unless he in fact both liquidates the Controls which have placed big business firmly in the saddle, and reorganises production radically on inclusive regional lines. There is, of course, much besides this that needs doing; but these two changes hold, we believe, the key to all the others. The making of them involves, we believe further, a large extension of wartime socialisation, and a high wind in political circles. But unless our new Ministers are empowered—and prepared—to face that, nothing much will happen, and we shall not get the extra weapons that we need for speedy victory.

A LONDON DIARY

One reason for Rommel's success in Libya is the efficiency of his organisation for tank repair. While British tanks are often abandoned when temporarily knocked out Rommel has a special device for hoisting damaged tanks on to lorries in the night, rushing them to the repair shop, and getting them hastily re-fitted. British tanks only occasionally have more than one life, German tanks seem to have nine. This may be explained by the fact that Rommel is himself an engineer and mechanic. An American magazine not long ago gave a fascinating account of Rommel refusing to accept anyone as an officer under him who could not build a whole tank with his own hands. The article describes the astonishment of a Prussian officer of the old-fashioned monocled type searching for General Rommel and finally discovering him in a tank repair shop, stripped to the waist, working like a mechanic somewhere in the intestines of a tank.

* * *

I have been looking at the text of a recent special Moscow broadcast to the German people by an important official, Ernst Fischer. It is illuminating about the Russian approach to this issue of " Hitlerism " and " the German people." German soldiers, those who obey Hitler's commands, must be for practical purposes considered " Hitlerites " ; they are to be smitten hip and thigh in a way that recalls the fate of the Amalekites, Hittites and other ancient enemies of the Jews. How long they are considered Hitlerites depends, Fischer explains, on whether they continue to obey without resistance during, not only after, the war. No outsider can distinguish the Nazis from the anti-Nazis unless they themselves show the distinction. After discussing Molotov's Note on German atrocities, Fischer concluded : " If the sentiment of the German people is opposed to the Hitler executioners, if this sentiment even condemns them, the mere condemnation does not make things any easier for the people whose heart is torn out by the German troops. That is why this sentiment will not help Germany when the day of reckoning comes. By its own acts the German people must prove that it has nothing in common with Hitler . . Sentiment is worth nothing when it is a matter of life and death. Action means everything. . . . When on the coming day of judgment the terrible accusation is spoken : 'German hands burned my home, killed my child and tortured my wife to death,' then humanity must be able to rise and say : 'German hands helped to destroy the criminals.' That day will save Germany." That seems, as far as it goes, to be good sense and good propaganda.

* * *

All this to the propagandist is a question of tactics. No Communist can confuse Nazis with the German people : it is contrary to basic doctrine. But he adopts a very rough test for purposes of short-term propaganda. The distinction between short-term propaganda to destroy the invader and long-term propaganda for future settlement is probably less dangerous in Russia than in Britain. The moment fighting ends, Stalin can switch over to quite another tack if he wishes. This is less easy in a political democracy. In the last war, by the effect it produced on the British public, Northcliffe's " hate the Hun " propaganda made impossible the honest attempt to carry out at the Peace the promises we made to Germans in order to persuade them to revolt. Tell British people that somehow their troubles will be over and that we shall be safe by merely having a stiff revenge on the German people, and enough of them may believe it to side-track attention from the serious and appallingly difficult job of salvaging Europe— The sentimental pro-German and the sentimental Vansittartite are both menaces, because they prevent any realistic consideration of the problem of Europe, which includes Germany. Already I notice that business men, once appeasers, then Vansittartites, are beginning to ask how to keep a capitalist Germany in view of Russia's advance !

* * *

All honest and informed reports from " inside Germany " are of interest these days, though we may be sure that none of them can present more than a corner of the picture. Two points I had not heard before were made to me this week-end by a neutral acquaintance who came from Germany recently and knows it well. He said he did not think the first realisation of heavy defeats in Russia would come as any shattering shock to the German public. In his experience, the German public has all along believed much more in the possibility of defeat than is ordinarily supposed. He had seen numerous indications that the Goebbels propaganda is gently moving towards increased emphasis on the " backs to the wall," " defeat means annihilation " theme, as opposed to the proclamation of imminent victory. His other point was that the propaganda intended to persuade people that the German regime is a form of " Socialism " is on the increase. Steel barons with enormously inflated war profits, Junkers living fatly and profitably on giant estates, say cheerfully : " Our German Socialism is a fine thing—it is the only Socialism. That is what the working people outside Germany do not understand." I note, by the way, that during the past ten days Radio Paris and many newspapers under German control have given up the assumption of swift victory and begun significantly to counter a revival of the old pro-Russian feeling in France. They think it necessary to say that " it is wrong for Frenchmen to rejoice at the advance of the Red Army—a victory for the Red Army means the bolshevisation of Europe." In a word, " Frenchmen may not like us Germans, but how much worse off will you be if the Communists win ! " To this propaganda, General de Gaulle's speech, with its emphasis on the collaboration of Free France and Soviet Russia now and after the war, was a useful retort.

* * *

I can never make up my mind whether undergraduates are barometers of public opinion or not. Probably not. Consider, for example, the implications of the Oxford Resolution passed by large majorities all over the country, just a month before Hitler took power. A symptom certainly, but an uncertain guide. At present I doubt if Oxford is thinking at all ; at any rate, I have rarely found undergraduates quite so non-committal— " cagey " is, I think, the precise modern word for it—as at the moment. They are interested in, but will not join, Federal Union ; interested in, but will take no hand in, the revival of the League. The most successful undergraduate society at the moment, *Cosmos*, has arisen, phœnix-like, from the ashes of Federal Union and the League of Nations Union, both of which it has incorporated, presumably on the assumption that if you mate the past and the future you breed the present. The declaration of *Cosmos*, which expresses vast interest in all manner of things, expresses no conviction at all. Again, undergraduates are interested in but unwilling to commit themselves to God. There was never, I am told by an Oxford friend, so much religious discussion, but the churches remain obstinately unfilled.

In a strong passage in his speech on the confidence resolution Mr. Churchill declared that he had come from America deeply impressed with the importance of China. That makes it all the more puzzling that China seems not at present to be represented in the new Pacific Council. China is the only Pacific power now winning victories against Japan. One wonders anxiously what effective contact there will be with China if, as now seems probable, Rangoon is occupied by the Japs and the approach to the Burma Road cut off. The alternative road from India to China is far from complete, and the other routes into Burma are not, I believe, much more than mule tracks, while the Singkiang road from Russia, which may some day be very important, is immensely long and difficult to develop. In any case Russia is too much occupied in the West to continue at present her support to China. All this makes it all the more important publicly to affirm the alliance with China. This is being done at the " Salute to China " meeting at the Central Hall, Westminster, at 2.30 on Saturday, February 14th. This meeting will be addressed by the Bishop of Hongkong, Sir Neill Malcolm, Margery Fry, Dr. Gordon Thompson, and others. At this meeting for the first time the University China Committee and the Lord Mayor's Fund for Relieving Distress in China have gladly associated themselves with the China Campaign Committee, which hitherto they have always regarded as too political for their liking. The meeting will be wound up by Dr. Wellington Koo, the Chinese Ambassador, whose speech at the Guildhall this week was remarkably clear and outspoken about the trans-continental pincers which Japan and Germany now hope to close round the British defences in the Middle East.

* * *

Mr. John Christie, to whose enterprise and musical taste we owe the Glyndebourne Opera and unforgettable performances of Mozart and Verdi, has just sold by auction the cellar he formed for the restaurant of the Opera House. The wine fetched some £17,000, according to the newspapers, and Mr. Christie said that he regarded its sale as " a gesture to future patrons of the Festival." After the war, he explained, they would be " encouraged to order iced beer without any feeling of embarrassment."

* * *

" Our whole policy in India, our whole policy in Egypt stands condemned if we condemn Japan."—Mr. Amery, defending Japanese aggression in China, in the House of Commons, February 27, 1933.

CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

A 5/- prize for the first entry in this column goes to D. Verschoyle.

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LITTLE ENEMY RESISTANCE TO BRITISH WITHDRAWAL.—Headline in *Sunday Dispatch.*

Soon the Soviet Trade Union leaders will be going home to tell Russian workers what they have seen in this country. Surely it would help to dispel the mistrust referred to by Mr. Anthony Eden if they can take back with them an assurance from the Football Associations of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales that they would welcome an opportunity to send a British team to Moscow as early as possible after the war and also add an invitation for a return match in London.—*Daily Sketch.*

The stars foretell that the fortune of war in the East will favour the side which seizes, fortifies and retains most and best island bases.—*Sunday Express.*

REFLECTIONS ON THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

No one supposes that Mr. Maxton and his two I.L.P. colleagues are the only members of the House of Commons without confidence in His Majesty's Government. The character of the vote last week was determined by considerations of great complexity. Few members of the House see any effective alternative to Mr. Churchill as Prime Minister; some, Sir Herbert Williams, for example, are "eager to wound and yet afraid to strike"; others, again, were deeply impressed by the Prime Minister's reply, in which he changed, with brilliant skill, from the role of an unrepentant Ajax defying the lightning that was to come, to the role of a coaxing suitor of the House, with a Ministry of Production in one hand, and a half-promise of tantalising "flexibilities" in the other. Paganini never exhibited his virtuosity more supremely than did Mr. Churchill in that final speech. The "old parliamentary hand" touched effectively every chord from banter to epic narration on which the House is certain to respond.

Where do we stand now? There is anxiety over severe defeats; we know that there are defeats perhaps still more severe to come. There is dissatisfaction with the level of production; that will be quietened until it is seen how the new Ministry of Production works. It is felt that Mr. Churchill needs new men about him; it is not improbable that, in the next two or three months, we shall see changes in personnel most of which will be nicely calculated to maintain that difficult balance of party relationships in the Government which enables Mr. Churchill to offer occasional scraps of social reform to the Labour Party without risking the indignation of the 1922 Committee by attempting any decisive economic experiments. We shall gradually begin to feel the weight of American intervention both in men and in munitions of war. Bad news from the Pacific may well be balanced by continued good news from the Russian front. General Auchinleck may drive back his tenacious opponent into Tripolitania. If things become very much worse, there will be a demand for more fundamental changes than, at the moment, Mr. Churchill is prepared to concede; he may then have to make them. If he has important victories to report, the basic principles of his strategy and organisation will remain predominantly unquestioned. If the position remains much as now, without obvious gain or measurable deterioration, he will once more placate the House by those minor readjustments which gratify all who dread a breach in national unity, but feel that something must be done. Mr. Churchill, in short, will remain Prime Minister so long as most people feel that the final result is certain and that he has not committed irreparable mistakes. The government, in much its present form, will go on, on these conditions, until we have a Pisgah-sight of victory. It is at that moment that it will begin to confront those vital problems which, so far, he has so skilfully evaded by his initial assumption, accepted, it appears, if a little curiously, by Mr. Attlee, and quite naturally by Sir Archibald Sinclair and Mr. Ernest Brown, that the process of waging the war effectively can be separated from the need to face the issues, international as well as domestic, of the peace.

The implications which this assumption carries for Mr. Churchill are, of course, clear. As he told the Union of Conservative Associations eighteen months ago, what he wants is a victory for "traditional" Britain with, of course, a few "measures of practical reconstruction." He could not have won that victory certainly before June 22, 1941, and probably not before Pearl Harbour; now that victory, granted the great Russian victories, and the scale upon which American resources will come into effective operation in 1943 and, even more, in 1944, becomes a high probability. It refuses the organisational changes which might secure the Russian hope of a decisive result in the next winter; that would involve now that transformation of "traditional" Britain, and its empire, which the leader of the Conservative Party is concerned, intelligibly enough, to avoid. For that transformation might shatter the forces of Conservatism in the war period itself; and Mr. Churchill might then find himself, perhaps even after a general election, the leader of that wide, but unorganised progressive opinion in this country which the Labour Party has not yet found the ability to attract, and which remains incoherent in form and only half-articulate in substance. The theory of national unity, as Mr. Churchill proposes to apply it, means that "traditional" Britain wins the war and starts the peace with the advantage it enjoyed in 1919 of determining what shall be done with its possession of the state-power.

Two things only, I suggest, could destroy these implications. They would be destroyed by Mr. Churchill's defeat; but that, as I have said, seems to me contingent upon disasters of irreparable magnitude which are now improbable. I do not think it can be seriously prophesied that the Axis nations now command the resources to break the will-power of the Grand Alliance. The second thing which might destroy it is the outbreak of profound European revolution, sharply Left in its orientation, as defeat began to eat away the foundations of Hitler's power. For the psychological effect of that outbreak would be to show, certainly all over Europe, and over a considerable part of the East, how completely devoid of ethical and material bases the "tradition" which Mr. Churchill seeks to preserve has now, even in Britain, become. Unless he adjusted himself as swiftly to the demands of the forces it would unleash, as he adjusted himself, with brilliant insight, on June 22, 1941, he would be unable to maintain the unity of the forces behind his government. At that moment, without such an adjustment, he would appear to two-thirds of the world an anachronism, a splendid anachronism, indeed, of heroic proportions, but the symbol, nevertheless, of purposes which history was passing by.

The future is veiled from us, and it may well be that Mr. Churchill will get his victory on his own terms. In that event he will have bequeathed to the post-war generation a triumph about the use of which there will, neither at home nor abroad, be fundamental agreement of any kind. And the interests at stake in the disposition of victory will have ceased, when the pressure of external danger is withdrawn, either to possess that willingness to accept drastic innovation, which is the temper of the present time, or the ability to postpone their differences before the transcendent need of survival. The nation will have conquered; it will then begin to dispute about the end for which it has conquered. The principles of freedom and democracy will have been vindicated; but the institutional basis from which the application of the principles may proceed will still be wanting. To lay that foundation after the war by mutual consent will, within the economic and social framework of our present order, be a task perhaps even greater than that victory of which Mr. Churchill proposes to be the architect. No doubt, on any showing, his victory is magnificently worth while. To break the ugly power of Hitlerism is to destroy the ugliest manifestation of counter-revolution any age has ever seen. But it does not, of itself, destroy the forces out of which Hitlerism grew. That is not a matter to which Mr. Churchill has directed his attention. That is not, even more, a matter that he seeks to bring within the compass of the policy he deems permissible.

Harold J. Laski

The nation needs your
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THE BOTTOM OF THE WELL—II

Lip service is paid to the connection between democracy's survival and its ability to face facts—to accept truth. But truth is nevertheless at a discount. The services, Parliament, broadcasting, press, films are all more or less—without necessarily being villainous—in a conspiracy to twist or withhold truth. The truth-teller has come to be regarded as pessimistic or defeatist: the "alarm and despondency" idea marked a dislike of truth. The British public—perhaps any public—is easily swayed; ninepins aren't in it with the Baldwins, Chamberlains, Windsors, Ironsides, Gorts. The elasticity of democracy, perhaps; but isn't there a catch? The policy of a true democracy is a synthesis of the true feelings of the people. Those feelings are always to some extent imposed—partly by leaders, partly by conditions, partly by tradition. But never until now, I think, by a propaganda machine. The question, to my mind, is how far the publicity machine, by misrepresenting truth, nibbles away the fabric of national honesty, and paves the way for more and more deception.

The Pegasus of publicity has lost a wing and grown a paunch; in other words, news sources have dried up but the machinery to deal with them has grown. Result, vacuum. Jones, of the B.B.C., Smith of the M.O.I., Brown of the Press, White of the films, Black of Public Relations, must justify their many lives by filling it up. It can't be filled by facts or truth, because Government and Services negative everything except wishful thinking; wishful thinking therefore, more and more embroidered, it has to be. Reflect now that the whole talent and momentum of advertising, which formerly did its best, and successfully, to make people buy what they didn't want, has been diverted into "selling" a Government to the public. If you are paid to advertise someone's whisky, you can't, even if you know it's poison, attack it without losing your job; if you are being paid to boost the Minister of Circumlocution, you must see that the public think him a great guy even if he's got delirium tremens. If you are being paid to edit British news, you must see that a British defeat is a strategic withdrawal. And in the end you may find yourself writing about British victories when the Stormtrooper taps you smartly on the head.

It is the gradualness of this business which is alarming; we are gradually coming to have a veil of complacency between us and the truth. Members of Parliament, who ought to provide the safety-valve, are themselves deluded and ill-informed; they may cry, too late, "Why did we lose Singapore?" without realising that they should have cried much earlier, "What is Thailand's real attitude?" without realising that it is already almost too late to cry, "What is the truth about India?"

It is easy to criticise, difficult to construct; particularly when construction, or reconstruction, involves not only changing horses in mid-flood, but also in unseating a number of riders who are well and truly stuck to the saddle. But if one presumes to criticise, one must have a bat at construction.

I take as a premise that Britain should win the war, and the peace, as Britain; not as a Soviet or American state. I mean this: the bull-dog has fleas, plenty of them, and often behaves abominably; but I like him well enough to prefer curing his faults and fleas to dyeing him red or teaching him to say "Okay, Chief." The England worth fighting for, it seems to me, is the England created by individuals, individuals of every class and kind, who have found the strength to permeate the world in just that queer mixture of phlegm and laziness and mind-your-own-business and humour and honesty and courage which is English. Verily the shouting of shop-stewards is in mine ears; may I be dead before they rule this individualistic country. England communised or Americanised will be a dingy little island; but the publicity machine, blowing where it listeth not, may accomplish what American films and Soviet propaganda have failed to do. That is why truth is vital; truth, not adulation, about Russia and the Ogpu; truth, not complacency, about India and the Congress; truth, not wishful thinking, about Auchinleck's depleted forces. If Truth is at the bottom of the well, Publicity is sitting on the top.

And for remedy we must go, hat in hand, drat him, to Churchill; because Churchill is in the direct line of great English individuals, and senses unerringly the British way. But Churchill stands, and insists on standing, alone; Churchill despises, and insists on despising, war aims. These are the rocks on which he may founder. A people can be galvanised by leadership, fear, and the conviction of their destiny; Germany uses all three, and so does Russia; we use none wholeheartedly. The Atlantic Charter, not applicable to India, is flummery in the ears of a factory worker in Sheffield or a coolie in Bengal; the voices of weary Ministers declaiming about ultimate meaningless victory are as the buzzings of humble bees. Yet I mulishly believe that among the fallible peoples of the earth the English have, since the Greeks, most nearly evolved the art of living; and that that art should not perish nor be extinguished by foreign import from friend or foe; a new order maybe, but certainly an order in the English tradition—why should we be ashamed of it?—can be, and must be, defined; can be, and must be, proudly stated by forthright and courageous men. Then only, I think—just because the English character is what it is—the flames of enthusiasm and conviction will consume muddle and light activity; then only the publicity vacuum will be quickly filled by only one Jones or Smith; then only will Truth begin to emerge from the well.

Perhaps it is too late; perhaps it will all be the same in a hundred years; perhaps Truth can never be heard through the din of marching feet. Meanwhile, in the English tradition, I shall obstinately continue to teach my grandmothers to suck eggs. LIONEL FIELDEN

ERSATZ CONTINENT

[The facts in this article are all taken from German decrees or official publications in the occupied countries].

HITLER's invading armies consist of military, economic and spiritual (Kultur) destruction corps. Economic destruction is a routine scheme enforced upon every invaded country. Currency is gradually annulled by substituting the "Illusion Mark" at a rate of exchange favourable to the Nazis. Stocks are taken over as well as human beings to serve Nazi purposes. The official looting parties, which raid the country and "confiscate" the crops of farmers and small peasants, work at high speed to prevent the hiding or destruction of property.

The consequences of the New European Order Economic System are considerable shortage and partly entire lack of vital foodstuffs. Food queues form long before dawn, in invaded countries, for bread, potatoes, vegetables or small amounts of fuel. On the other hand, unrationed additional foodstuffs such as split peas, rice, semolina or sausage meat are unobtainable and ersatz of dubious quality is displayed in depleted shops, with alluring posters urging the populations to "try this new dish."

The Czech population gets about one-third of the Nazis' rations: 125 grammes of butter (about a quarter of a pound) a week, whereas a Czech is only allowed 35 gr. A Nazi gets 400 gr. of meat, a Czech 200, etc. But a Nazi always gets his share of rationed goods, whereas a Czech is often turned away. The famous shoe factory of Bata, that used to turn out 170,000 pairs of shoes a day (now only one-tenth), advertises shoes with wooden soles at high prices. The great wool industries of Bohemia and Moravia are closed because their whole wool stocks have been taken over. Cloth factories produce only ersatz, which is more expensive and does not wear well. The excellent medical and social welfare organisations have not been interfered with.

In Holland, a strict rationing scheme and the shortage of unrationed food provide only 1,600 calories for each person, whereas about 2,600–3,000 on the average are needed to keep fit. Large stocks of cattle have been slaughtered to feed the occupation army or have been imported into Germany. A quarter of the sugar stocks have been confiscated by Germany. When the Netherlands were invaded, 170,000 tons of fat, 150,000 tons of tea, and 45,000 tons of coffee were "confiscated." The Dutch are urged to drink New Order coffee made of berries, nuts and roasted carrots, and "German Tea" of dried herbs. Ersatz soup in ersatz tins, and "savoury pastes" whose content is not disclosed, are widely advertised. As a result of poor quality milk and bread and the lack of albumen in a country where food was extremely rich, people suffer from serious intestinal disturbances and skin rashes. There is an increase of tuberculosis, malignant 'flu and venereal diseases—the latter due to the army of occupation.

In Norway, butter has entirely disappeared. Margarine production was to be stopped by January. Cheese is available for Nazis only. In a country where fish was an important factor for home consumption and export, there is an acute fish-shortage, especially in herring and mackerel. Bread is of very poor quality and causes intestinal disturbances. Since December, 1940, flour has been mixed with cellulose and the State Fisheries Department has recently reported the "successful mixture of fishmeal in bread which might prevent the shortage of bread." There is a shortage of potatoes, vegetables and bacon, which goes to Germany, and long food queues form for rationed goods as well as for the few available unrationed foodstuffs. The new pig fodder consists of 70 per cent. grass and 30 per cent. cellulose. The cows suffer with stoppage of the gullet as a result of cellulose fodder. The Nazi-controlled *Aftenposten* explained that this was only "because the cows like cellulose." Four weeks later, however, the same paper had to admit that "cellulose fodder swells and sticks in the gullet."

In Denmark, pigs, cattle and poultry have been slaughtered or exported to Germany. Whereas the normal consumption in Copenhagen was 3,000 pigs a day, there is by now only an average of three pigs on the market; and eight calves, compared to 2,500 in pre-invasion days. Poultry stocks have decreased from 21.8 millions in July, 1940, to 11.9 in spring, 1941. Egg production is 48 per cent. lower than in 1940, the production of margarine has been entirely stopped since spring, 1941, and there is a lack of edible fats. In 1940, 37,585 tons of margarine was produced, compared with 84,137 tons in winter, 1939. Milk production has been reduced by 33 per cent. By now, only skimmed milk is distributed. The quality of butter has deteriorated considerably. Bakers receive only 36 per cent. of their pre-invasion rations, and in many towns, such as Randers, bakers are not allowed to bake and shops must remain closed one day a week "because of lack of fat, flour, sugar and fuel." The use of ersatz instead of fat in soap has caused serious skin diseases. Copenhagen hospitals statistics showed already in October, 1940, 500 cases of skin disturbances due to the use of New Order soap. And *Extrabladet* reveals that in December they had risen to 1,100. The anti-tuberculosis society published a warning by Professor Faber declaring that the nation's health was endangered by malnutrition, due, among other facts, to the poor quality of skimmed milk, the lack of any protective vegetables, and the substitution of valueless ersatz.

In Belgium, experiments are being made in using small shrimps, which were usually thrown away, and mixing them with an ersatz made in Germany to produce "fishpaste." But the press complains that "the population is very stubborn when progressive feeding methods are at stake." Footwear is difficult to obtain, but Nazi officials have promised shortly shoes will be again available for reasonable prices, with the new "splinter-proof glass soles" with thin rubber soles fixed over them to prevent skidding.

In France the most important feature is a severe bread-rationing which allows only 100 gr. a day per head, 200 gr. for workers, and 350 gr. for those employed on heavy physical work. The average consumption of bread among the working classes was about $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds (750 gr.) Wine is rationed to $\frac{1}{2}$-litre a day, because large Government stocks have been taken to Germany. The health office for the Seine Department stated that the mortality in January rose to 49 per cent. above the normal figures as compared with January, 1939. Infantile mortality has risen by 50 per cent. This is due to the lack or shortage and the poor quality of milk. The *Société d'Etudes Scientifiques* issued a statement by its president, Dr. Léobardy, at their annual meeting in unoccupied France (Lyons), that tuberculosis was rising on a hitherto unknown scale.

In Poland, rations allocated to the population are inadequate. Early shopping hours are reserved for Nazis only, which means that Poles often find that their rations have been given away. Nazis are allowed 250 gr. of margarine; Poles none. Sugar to the Nazis 125 gr.; none to the Poles. Nazis get 50 gr. of oatmeal, potato flour, sage, 50 gr. of jam and 150 gr. of soup cubes;

the Poles none. But the Poles get 125 gr. of synthetic honey, the Nazis having taken over the whole honey stocks.

In Germany the food situation has improved as compared with 1936-1940, owing to the import of various foreign foodstuffs. Many things which the Germans had not seen or tasted are being distributed now and then in small quantities "owing to the improved situation."

In reality, these additional foodstuffs are due to the looting of invaded countries, where millions of Nazi-subjugated people are suffering great hardship. Deprived of their private property and their national goods, their health and welfare —not to forget the lives and the freedom which thousands have sacrificed—they have been given nothing in return but terror and ersatz.

ELISABETH CASTONIER

THE FACTS

FACTS are what no one can be in possession of
Outside the Government's innermost fold,
Something that all must concur in suppression of,
Facts in their fullness must never be told.

Only the facts give a hold on reality,
Though stranger than fiction the facts could be shown,
Interested persons must learn with finality
It's not in their interest for facts to be known.

Slips diplomatic, strategic and tactical,
Unforeseen setbacks which tend to recur,
All must appear as the only course practical,
Having regard to the facts as they were.

What are the facts? Are they incomprehensible?
Are they the cause, or the cure of our qualms?
Do they, when whispered, make people insensible?
Do they strike dumb, like the Monster of Glamis?

What are the facts? Are they sunny or sinister?
Ignorant queries are here out of place;
All we can read is the face of a Minister
Pallid from looking the facts in the face.

All we can know is, that facts inaccessible
Govern the actions the crisis exacts;
All the decisions, however unguessable,
Will be in accordance with all of the facts.

SAGITTARIUS

SHOES: CHURCHILLIAN

MOST of us, I am sure, paused inquisitively when, reading our Sunday papers, we came on news-stories bearing such headings as "Steward Put Mr. Churchill's Shoes in the Oven" and "Premier Had Shoes Warmed: Put in Oven on Air Trip." The second heading was, I think, the more titillating of the two, as it left us in doubt whether it was the Premier or his shoes that had been put in the oven. Still, even if it was only the shoes that were put in the oven, that was a good enough story, since the shoes were Mr. Churchill's. According to the *Sunday Express*, "Mr. Churchill had his shoes warmed in the galley oven not long before the flying boat *Berwick*, bringing him home from America, landed him and his party in England. . . . While dressing in the morning, the Premier mentioned that his shoes felt cold. So the steward took them to the galley, put them in the oven, warmed them to a nice temperature, and returned them to the Prime Minister, who expressed the greatest satisfaction." The *Sunday Times* reports the incident in almost the same words, so that future historians will have no excuse for wrangling about what really happened on a memorable occasion.

The story may seem a little tame to some people, but I confess I read it with as much interest as if it had been a passage describing the mutual benevolence of Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller. There is a Pickwickian excess in the words, "expressed the greatest satisfaction." Most people would merely have thanked the steward. An old-fashioned woman in her forties would probably have said: "Thank you so much." But Mr. Churchill, with the lavishness that is part of his character, "expressed the greatest satisfaction," and we can almost see and hear him doing it.

Trifles of this kind are often spoken of with contempt, and the narration of them is dismissed as gossip or tittle-tattle. Well, if a story about a great man's having his shoes warmed is gossip, I am on the side of gossip. The greater the man, the more we want to hear even the most trivial things about him. They help—at least, some of them do—to build up a portrait of him that makes us know him as we know our acquaintances. Mr. Gladstone's collar was a small matter in comparison with his moral passion, but we are interested in characteristics and character, and his collar made him known as a curiously familiar figure in the less stately homes of England. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's orchid and eyeglass, again, gave him an unforgettable place in the imaginations of English men and women and so, it might be argued, served as an advertisement for his various policies. Caricaturists—those realistic students of the essentials of human nature —have always recognised the use of apparently petty characteristics as aids to portraiture. Hence they make the most of Hitler's rather ungenerous moustache and of the gallery of medals that Goering wears over his heart. When Sickert died the other day, even the most aesthetic enthusiasts for his painting recalled his eccentric taste in hats and the fact that on one occasion he went about with one trouser-leg cut short at the knee. The greater the man, the more we wish to hear of even the tiniest eccentricities of his behaviour and make-up.

It is a rather significant fact that, among English writers, the most generally idolised is Dr. Johnson, about whom we are told a greater number of petty details than about any other author. He, too, like Mr. Churchill, was the subject of an anecdote about shoes—an anecdote that makes Johnson in his days at Pembroke College alive to us even in our schooldays. "Mr. Bateman's lectures at Christ Church," writes Boswell, in describing the famous scene, "were so excellent that Johnson used to come and get them at second hand from Taylor, till his poverty being so extreme that his shoes were worn out, and his feet appeared through them, he saw that this humiliating circumstance was perceived by the Christ Church men, and he came no more. He was too proud to accept of money, and somebody having set a pair of new shoes at his door, he threw them away with indignation. How must we feel," comments Boswell, "when we read such an anecdote of Samuel Johnson!" Boswell, like Chehov, had an instinct for the significant trivial detail that makes a man a living figure in literature.

The more we read about Dr. Johnson, the more we enjoy the minute details of his behaviour, and with every new detail we seem to become more intimate with him. How much less interesting it is to read of his opinions on Scottish law than to learn from Boswell that "he has particularities which it is impossible to explain. He never wears a nightcap . . .; but he puts a handkerchief on his head in the night. . . He sets open a window in the coldest day or night, and stands before it. It may do with his constitution; but most people, amongst whom I am one, would say, with the frogs in the fable, 'This may be sport to you, but it is death to me!'" Such things are interesting about any human being, but how overwhelmingly interesting about a man of genius!

Not without interest, too, it is to know that Johnson ate fish with his fingers. "An old tutor of Macdonald," says Boswell, "always ate fish with his fingers, alleging that a knife and fork gave it a bad taste. I took the liberty to observe to Dr. Johnson that he did so. 'Yes!' said he, 'but I do it because I am short-sighted and afraid of bones, for which reason I am not fond of eating many kinds of fish, because I must use my fingers." Afraid of bones! How it recalls to one the terrors of childhood over the breakfast herring!

There is not a single peculiarity of Dr. Johnson, indeed, of which we are not the richer for having the record preserved. We may be indifferent to tea, but when we read how Goldsmith brought out his watch and announced that they must part as it was midnight, and how Johnson retorted "What is that to you and me!" and insisted that they must go and drink tea with Mrs. Williams, we feel that this is tea-drinking on the heroic—or New Zealand—scale. His habit of beating with his feet as an alternative to smoking; his insatiable passion for wall-fruit; his habit of secreting orange peel from the table in his pocket; his method of "turning the candles with the heads downwards, when they did not burn bright enough, and letting the wax drop upon the carpet" which, as Boswell says, "could not but be disagreeable to a lady"; his rudenesses; the noises he made at table; even his more foolish superstitions—for example:

> He had another particularity, of which none of his friends ever ventured to ask an explanation. It appeared to me some superstitious habit, which he had contracted early, and from which he had never called upon his reason to disentangle him. This was his anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage by a certain number of steps from a certain point, or at least so as that either his right or his left foot (I am not certain which) should constantly make the first actual movement when he came close to the door or passage. Thus I conjecture: for I have, upon innumerable occasions, observed him suddenly stop, and then seem to count his steps with a deep earnestness; and when he had neglected or gone wrong in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony and, having gone through it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion.

If gossip makes so great a contribution to our knowledge of Johnson, Pepys and Charles Lamb, it seems to me that in recent years we have been too severe on the gossip-mongers. We have spoken of gossip as though it were a sort of scandal, or, at least, a kind of rubbishy talk about the things that do not matter in the lives of eminent men and women. To me it seems that there is nothing that does not matter in the lives of eminent men and women. I am as much interested as a child in knowing what is Mr. Shaw's favourite pudding and whether Mr. Priestley takes salt or sugar with his porridge. Trivial, you may think, but of such small things are the good biographies and diaries largely made. Hence I make no apologies for dwelling on the story of how the steward put Mr. Churchill's shoes in the oven as one of the outstanding journalistic revelations of the week.

Y. Y.

THE MOVIES

"L'Esclave Blanche," at Studio One.

I believe that *L'Esclave Blanche* was made just before the war. How it has reached us, I don't know, but here it is, and it is a film with nearly all the qualities. First, perhaps, the unstressed visual imagination, a handling of photography as shapely and lucid as good French prose. Then, the portrayal of manners, in which the French, whether writing novels or directing films, have always excelled. Then, dialogue, acting, plot: *L'Esclave Blanche* is as taut as a well-made play. Lastly, æsthetic intelligence, or balance. Since no other film this week possesses any one of these qualities, let alone all, I shall leave the rest in silence.

An express nears the Turkish frontier. Long before the passport officers and armed police board the train, we scent the presence of a corrupt tyranny. There are hostile or frightened looks among the local passengers; a few women with black veils occupy a closed compartment. In a first-class carriage a high Turkish official on his way home is explaining to his bride, a Frenchwoman, that she may find the new conditions of her life difficult. (Her dress suggests a date in the early nineteen hundreds.) And so it turns out. Her seclusion begins to jar. The domination of family interests, marriage between children and old men, corrupt politics, the ceremony and intrigue of the Court: we are given a fascinating picture of oriental manners. At the head of this custom-ridden and slug-like society is the Sultan (Dalio), a jumpy little pottering tyrant who is open to liberal influences but likely at any instant, with a change of favourites, to alter his policy. He will yield to reforms when it means the return of riches of which he has been robbed by his ministers; but Europeanism—as represented by his chief adviser with the French wife—shocks and terrifies him, and there is an oddly compelling scene when the electricians are installing electric light in the palace and their tapping brings the half-crazed monarch staggering down from his room with a revolver. Such incidents might have been treated with a too easy satire, but the director, Marc Sorkin, has had the imagination to retrieve them always with realistic detail. The atmosphere of the Court is wonderfully conveyed, and the photography of the interiors with their gilt gates and mosaics, trellised sunlight, a cheap phonograph on a Louis side-table, could hardly have been better done. The story is more dramatic than my hints of it, and ends with the narrow escape in a railway train of the couple seen at the beginning making for Constantinople. Any French film now seems to belong to another world, but how good, how very good, this one is!

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

MUSIC

London Symphony Orchestra. Four Concerts, conductor, Walter Goehr. Wigmore Hall.

On January 31st occurred the first of four orchestral concerts to be given at the Wigmore Hall, through the next two months, by the L.S.O. under the able direction of Mr. Walter Goehr. The prospectus is extremely appetising, for the programmes not only contain two modern works with which many of us wish to be better acquainted (Bartok's superb *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta,* and Schönberg's *Kammersimfonie*), but are most cunningly arranged. John McCormack is, for once in a way, to sing some Wolf (with orchestra); that excellent pianist, Miss Phyllis Sellick, will give the first performance of Michael Tippett's new *Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra;* and later we shall hear Mr. Henry Holst in Mozart's *Violin Concerto in A.* The concert last Saturday was entirely devoted to the latter composer and included an outstandingly fine performance of that masterpiece of musical intensity and concentration, the *Piano Concerto in C minor.* Mr. Solomon, from whom a thoroughly musicianly delivery can always be expected, on this occasion played with a really wonderful distinction of style. Ease and fluency, under-emphasis, beautiful singing tone, exquisite phrasing—everything was there. In the *E flat Symphony* (K 543) Mr. Goehr achieved a proper Mozartian balance of tone, with the wind well to the fore (as it used to be at Glyndebourne). We look forward to February 21st.

Correspondence

WAR AND THE EMPIRE

SIR,—A month ago I publicly invoked the precedents of 1917 as a guide for our Imperial policy to-day when the situation is very similar to that of 1917. America then as now was just entering the war. Then as now there was need for the consolidation of the Empire and simultaneously for the collaboration of the English-speaking peoples. Then amidst the growing crisis of the war a great constructive policy bore fruit. Then an Imperial War Conference brought about, in the words of the Secretary of State, who presided, "a re-birth of Empire" and created the foundations and the plan of what Sir Robert Borden, the Prime Minister of Canada, in moving the principal Resolution, termed "an Imperial Commonwealth of United Nations." Then an Imperial War Cabinet was set up for consultation and decision. Why not now?

There are immense numbers of people, like myself, who have spent their lives in the service of the Empire and who care little for party politics but do care tremendously for the British Empire or the British Commonwealth of Nations. The policy that was devised in 1917 for its protection—the new Imperialism—commanded our loyalty and inspired our faith in its vitality. What has become of that policy? Why is there no Imperial War Cabinet to consult and act on behalf of the Empire? Why have there to be outspoken regrets by Viscount Bennett, a Conservative ex-Premier of Canada, in the House of Lords, and by Mr. Menzies, a recent Premier of Australia, broadcasting yesterday, that there is no Imperial War Cabinet? Why was it not set up when the war started?

Difficulties? Of course there were difficulties in 1917, the same sort of difficulties as there are to-day. General Botha, Premier of South Africa, was unable to leave South Africa: he was most effectively represented by his colleague, General Smuts. Mr. Hughes, Premier of Australia, was unable to leave Australia owing to a general election, but he was kept in close touch by cable on crucial issues such as the inclusion of India. He proved himself an active member of Cabinet and Conference in the following year of 1918. Could not the difficulties of to-day be similarly overcome?

It seemed from Mr. Churchill's speech on Tuesday that Australia's claim (echoed by New Zealand) to a seat in an Imperial War Cabinet was fully admitted. Then Lord Cranborne, Minister for the Dominions, seemed to impose conditions and limitations. Your Melbourne correspondent's message to-day speaks of Australia being offered permanent access to the War Cabinet but "without the right to participate in its decisions." Who has been "playing politics" in the very crisis of the Empire's fate? Has any good purpose been served?

Is it to be wondered at—it is certainly to be deplored—that in regard to the new Pacific Council "Australia desired and New Zealand preferred" that it should be located at Washington and not at London? Is it to be wondered at that Canada, at this late stage, is not anxious for an Imperial War Cabinet—seeing that she is now engaged in her maximum war effort in close and intimate collaboration with the United States and with much easier access to Washington than to London? I suggest that an Imperial War Conference is needed now to hold the Empire together by providing improved machinery for "consultation and agreement" and joint action in wartime.

The situation in the Far East is menacing and its reactions on the constitutional problem must long continue. What of India which was deliberately brought within the ambit of the Imperial Conference of 1917? I personally believe that if the Dominions and India had been brought more fully into consultation regarding Imperial policy and strategy things might have been very different to-day. Those primarily interested in Far Eastern defence would probably have accepted the main lines of world strategy which Mr. Churchill described on Tuesday. But they would scarcely have overlooked the very obvious local strategy of concentrating a strong Indian force in Lower Burma as a flank guard against a military promenade by the enemy down the Malay peninsula to Singapore. This could have been done as late even as last September. And it would also have safeguarded the vital base of the Burma Road.

HUBERT GOUGH

71 Elm Park Gardens,
S.W.10.

THE MEMORY OF MR. CHAMBERLAIN

SIR,—In your notes you imply that the reason we regarded the present Prime Minister "as the indispensable leader" was because "we feared that, if he were to fall, his successor might revive the policy of appeasement and end the war by sacrificing everything for which we have fought."

This is unfair to the memory of Neville Chamberlain. I knew the late Prime Minister as well as anyone knew him. He was a shy man and difficult to know. Doubtless, he said several foolish things, but he gave us by his Munich visit one year in which to prepare for war. Probably at the time of Neville Chamberlain's visit to Munich we might have had a war without an army. Would this have been wise? You may ask, "Why, if we had a year did we not prepare for war?" The answer is simple. Every proposal for preparation for war was opposed by members of the Liberal and the Labour Parties. Only one Liberal member voted for Conscription. That member was Mr. James Rothschild. In fairness to the dead, we must admit that if Mr. Neville Chamberlain were alive to-day he would, by his courage and sincerity, be an element of strength in the counsels of the present Cabinet.

The Savoy Hotel. MARGOT OXFORD

[The Conservative Party has had an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons ever since 1931. It took its full share in wrecking the hopes of international disarmament while that was possible. Instead it encouraged and aided the rearmament of both Germany and Japan. It did not "disarm" Britain as the cant cry suggests: on the contrary Britain spent more than a hundred millions each year on armaments rising to three hundred by 1938. Who got the benefit of this money, and what the nation bought with it is a still unsolved mystery. When at length every hope of disarmament had gone and the necessity of rearmament was apparent, Britain continued to arm with much expenditure, but, as the event showed, little result. Mr. Chamberlain was in office throughout this period: in supreme command during the last two years.—ED. "*N.S. & N.*"]

BREAD

SIR,—I am surprised that no answer to Mr. Boothby's letter of January 17th has appeared in THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION. The article that inspired this letter pointed out that the Ministry of Food explained its attempt to induce farmers to thresh early by the statement that "during the next few months it will be necessary to use the greatest possible amount of shipping for other vital purposes." That "shipping cannot be saved by using up our home wheat stocks early; such a course only postpones the trouble." The article proposed three methods by which the possible shortage of wheat might be met: (1) increased extraction of wheat; this involves compulsory use of flour of a higher degree of extraction; (2) restriction of the amount of bread eaten; (3) dilution of wheat flour with potato flour. Mr. Boothby objects to (1). Presumably (3) would be equally objectionable to him; and it is doubtful whether anything would be gained by eating potatoes in bread rather than in the usual ways. He does not say whether he advocates (2), which was attempted during the last war and universally condemned, or the continued import of wheat in amounts sufficient to maintain the supply of white flour. The choice between these four courses must be made and the interests of the community, as a whole, would be best served by the first.

Mr. Boothby says nothing about another point raised in this article—that is, the quality of wheatmeal bread as now supplied. Last summer the Accessory Food Factors Committee of the Lister Institute and the Medical Research Council proposed specifications of the flour to be used. In August, 1941, a circular sent by the Ministry of Health to local authorities, made it clear that the national wheatmeal flour was to comply with these specifications. It was to contain the greater part of the germ of wheat with some of the finer bran, but to exclude the coarser bran. However, a statutory rule and order of the Ministry of Food, issued in August, 1941, does not specify the selection of the more nutritious parts of the grain and allows the national wheatmeal bread to contain a high proportion of the coarser bran, which imparts the dark colour and flavour that are disliked. The bread that we get now is rarely up to the standard that we got when national wheatmeal bread was first introduced.

Now for the matter of freedom. In many places the consumer finds it impossible, or difficult, to get the national wheatmeal bread. Those who can get this bread cannot be sure that it will be up to the standard that they were promised. It is commonly believed that these limitations of our freedom to buy the genuine wheatmeal bread are due to consideration for the interests of the millers, not of the miners, as Mr. Boothby would have us believe. And what about the psychological effect of the use of shipping to import unnecessary amounts of wheat, if this also is done in the interests of the millers?

Mr. Boothby claims that millions of people loathe the sight of "brown" bread. Does he know? And how many object to the wheatmeal bread, as promised? This nobody knows, for the people have never had a chance to get a bread of this standard at the same price as white bread.

JOHN R. MARRACK

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

SIR,—The Master of the Rolls has appealed to the public not to give important historical documents to salvage. He rightly remarked that the loss to the war-effort if these documents were saved would be infinitesimal, while the loss to our national history if they were lost might be irreplaceable. But he did not seem to appreciate that there are documents of to-day which must presently be of vital historical interest.

After the last war historians and sociologists experienced the greatest difficulty in getting together the documentary material to form a background to their studies. It was to avoid a repetition of this situation that Mass-Observation started in September, 1939, to collect the written and printed material of this war.

This collection does not overlap with the material got together by the British Museum, Imperial War Museum, and other central bodies. It contains a representative selection of bulletins, menus, journals, leaflets, posters, pamphlets, etc., which are a vital part of the everyday reading matter of the war years. This sample material, a minute fragment of the salvage paper of Britain, should be preserved for the future.

M-O's War Library has been got together largely through the voluntary co-operation of hundreds of private people who have seen the importance of preserving a single specimen of these wartime documents from oblivion. There is not space to go into details here, but we shall be very glad to hear from anyone who would like to know more about the scheme. A postcard to Mass-Observation, P.B.6, Letchworth, Herts, will bring full description details, and suggestions as to how you can help.

TOM HARRISSON
H. D. WILLCOCK

PLANNING

SIR,—Dr. Robson is simply manufacturing differences of opinion between us as to the need for planning and the control of industry. He obviously finds it fun to erect an elaborate Aunt Sally at which to throw his sharp remarks, but it bears little resemblance to Pluto and Persephone.

See, for instance, his misinterpretation of "strange grandeur"; of his substitution of "concentration of industry" for my "concentration of population" in and round mining areas; see his fantastic final paragraph.

I am concerned that planning should be based on fact instead of on wishful thinking and preconceived theories. I want to face the problems of the seven great industrial areas with their badly planned, but not overcrowded, sites and not evade them. I want to recognise that we are a declining and not an expanding population. I want us to conserve and exploit to the utmost our great natural resources on and under the land, and replan Britain with and through its citizens in such a way that the essentials both of town and country are retained and heightened. Surely the problem has become so difficult and complicated that a statement of basic principles of planning is now essential? It would be interesting if Dr. Robson would state his, instead of retiring behind vague generalisations as to "what the planning movement is aiming at."

ELIZABETH DENBY

SIR,—It is difficult to believe that Dr. Robson misunderstood Miss Denby: he certainly misrepresents her. Readers should know that we produce more than twice as much iron ore as we import, while competent authorities hold the view that steel-users should follow steel-producers to the new locations, which are not, it is true, on the coalfields but on the ore bodies. The argument that electrical power frees industries from coal needs great qualification, and must, moreover, be considered in relation to the actual regional extension of the power grid. Economists' pronouncements on location of industry are dangerously divorced from reality owing to the technique which they employ. If their advice is followed we shall have not half-a-dozen "depressed areas," but scores.

E. G. R. TAYLOR

Birkbeck College
(University of London), E.C.4.

BOOKS AND PAPER

SIR,—Dr. Joad's article "Impairments and Erosions," is most opportune. Book production is indeed being stifled. The most urgent need at the moment is "an essential works order" for the few bookbinders responsible for about 90 per cent. of the output, and a more favourable consideration by the Ministry of Labour of the requirements of book-printers. (The number of printers properly so described is small).

And last, but not least, a more appropriate allocation of such paper as is available.

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CRISIS IN THE CHURCH

SIR,—The article by Mr. Sidney Dark in your issue of to-day makes it clear that, from a national standpoint, the succession of Dr. Temple to Canterbury would be an advantage. He also makes it clear that his appointment is widely opposed by the Tory clique who seemingly direct much of the official opinion in the Church of England. Several points emerge. The Church of England clings to its position as established and endowed. If it is to fulfil this position, it should seek to act in the interests of the whole nation. If it desires to repudiate it, then let it become disestablished. At the moment, a body which is largely of one political colour, containing as members some eight per cent. of the population at the most generous estimate, seeks to represent the whole State upon its religious side. The anomaly of this sectarian pretentiousness has no case for its continuance in the modern world.

The Church of England has been accused of being the Conservative Party at prayer. It has certainly abdicated ethical leadership in order to become the moral police force of the State, with its primate as a somewhat unctuous representative of such leadership as the Tory Party may possess at any given moment. Charges made by Dr. Frederic Harrison and underlined by Professor Tawney cannot be ignored lightly. They have their substance within Anglican history.

There is a further point which Mr. Dark omits.

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This reactionary condition must continue so long as its theological parallel holds sway. Vast liberating movements have swept through thought, yet Anglican theology remains set in its original grooves, neither learning nor forgetting. Thought precedes action, and obsolescent thinking will bear its natural fruits in the form of social reaction. The resignation of Dr. Lang may well indicate the parting of the ways. If the Church is to be in truth the Church of the English people, it must make progress along broader paths. If it is to be a conventionally conservative sect, it must take the consequences. It cannot have its demands met in both directions at the same time.

There seems to be no doubt that instructed opinion at large desires Dr. Temple. The conservative element, by its opposition, has raised important issues and it is good to see your contemporary, *The Manchester Guardian*, noticing the point. It is clear that the nation is seeking a spiritual culture, in the sense of a standard of discrimination. It is interesting that it is the inert mass of conventional ecclesiasticism which is hampering its evolution. It only serves to underline the fact that the Church of England, as it has grown to be, must be either ended or mended.

(Rev.) F. W. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

FUTURE OF AUSTRIA

SIR,—The Free Austrian Movement held its first public meeting on January 25th, and it is through your pages that I would like to draw the attention of our British friends to this movement. 1,500 Austrians filled Porchester Hall to overflowing to hear what the representatives of the 12 Austrian organisations had to say which have joined together to establish the unity of the Austrians in this country in support of the Allied cause. Two former Austrian Labour M.P.s, Democrats, Communists and Monarchists took the platform together with speakers from the youth groups, the big welfare and cultural organisations like the Austrian Centre and men of letters like the author Robert Neumann.

They all pledged themselves towards the same goal: sincere and determined collaboration for an all-out effort of the 15,000 Austrians in this country to fill their place in the winning of the war whether in an Austrian Fighting unit or Civil Defence, whether in war production or propaganda.

There exists complete agreement about the immediate issues: the German invaders of Austrian territory must be driven out to the last man and their Austrian quislings destroyed. Austrian sovereignty and independence must be restored, to give the Austrian nation a chance to decide freely and democratically their own future—internal and external. So far a full appreciation of Austria's struggle for national freedom has been obscured to the eyes of the world by two factors :—

(*a*) The sweeping and devastating way in which the incorporation of Austria was carried out by the Nazis. The stamping out of everything reminding the world of the previous existence of Austria, the thorough denationalisation carried out as in Poland and facilitated by the fact that foreign ruler and oppressed nation speak the same language.

(*b*) The fact that the disunity among Austrians in this country and elsewhere has served to present the Austrian issue only as a factional one: either as a Socialist or for instance a Monarchist, or even a German issue, but never as a national Austrian one.

By achieving a very high degree of unity the Free Austrian Movement demonstrates for the first time to the British public that the Austrian struggle for freedom is the fight of a whole nation for its independence and liberation from foreign rule; and in this way the Free Austrians in this country hope to serve their country's and nation's interest at the same time as serving the Allied cause.

Not all sections of Austrians in this country take this view. A group of Socialists of Leftish views do not grasp the real issue and therefore refuse to collaborate in a national front. Their attitude serves to perpetuate disunity among anti-Nazis and thereby hinders action. Their policy is doomed to failure at a time when it becomes clear to the people all over the world that the issue of this war is indivisible whether it is being fought at the Russian front, in the Pacific, Lybia or anywhere else. And that there is only one division of mankind : Nazi barbarism and anti-Nazi humanity.

EVA KOLMER

133, Hatherley Court, W.2.

* * *

SIR,—We Austrian Socialists are sometimes urged by our British friends to join in some common organisation with other Austrian groups. This, in practice, means the Habsburg Monarchists (with whom the Communists have now chosen to co-operate in the "Free Austrian Movement"). They have attached to themselves a few dissident Socialists, but the main body of Austrian Socialists stays out of the set-up.

Habsburg may loom large abroad, but counts little in Austria itself. A separate Austrian Monarchy under Archduke Otto Habsburg would hopelessly embroil us with our neighbours, the Czechs and Yugoslavs, whom the Habsburgs once ruled and want to rule again. The Habsburgists are no suitable allies for anybody who desires peace.

The future of Austria rests with the (Socialist) workers and with the (moderate conservative) peasants. As the peasants have no representation abroad, it is up to us Socialists to speak for our country.

Small, weak, independent states in the blitzkrieg era are a menace to themselves and others. This leads to the question : Should Austria after the war remain part of Germany, or should it become part of a Danube Confederation (with Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Rumania and Yugoslavia)?

The answer is: Neither. Austrians may be sick of Prussian rule, but a "block" of mainly agrarian Danube countries would in the long run be crushed by the superior weight of industrial Germany.

A Danubian Federation with Germany included is impossible because the smaller member nations distrust Germany, which would dominate it.

The best solution is a "regional block" so large that the Germans are not only outnumbered, but also industrially balanced by the other members. This means a European State, including not only Germany and the Danubian countries, but at least France and Italy. A real federal state, controlled by a central parliament, with single foreign policy, a single army, a single currency and internal free trade. The Germans would be in a minority.

This, incidentally, seems to me the only fair and democratic solution of the "German question." Any resurgence of the German war spirit could be held in check by the employment of the ordinary democratic machinery.

Personally, I am convinced that the war spirit will disappear from Germany as soon as its economic stimulus is removed. This is a strong argument in favour of nationalising Germany's heavy industries and making it not only a democratic, but a socialist state, irrespective of what happens in other countries.

London, W.C.2. F. SCHEU

IMPAIRMENTS AND EROSIONS

SIR,—When the early Puritans reached New England they engaged in the persecution from which they had themselves suffered here. The authorities of an industrial town, better known for its devotion to professional football than to liberty, recently took advantage of the opening of their new Public Library to purge the reading-room of all religious periodicals with the exception of the Hibbert Journal, which possibly conveys some mildly scientific connotation to the civic mind. On the other hand, the official organ of the Rationalist Press Association, the admirable views of whose President in relation to religious broadcasting are quoted in your issue of January 31st, is allowed to carry on the good work of pointing out current discrepancies between the precepts of Christianity and the practice of its exponents.

GALLIO

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MACMILLAN

BOOKS IN GENERAL

The French Wars lasted, with three breaks, from February, 1793, to June, 1815. Most inhabitants of the Three Kingdoms may not have been gravely deflected from the tenor of their daily life, but there were enemy landings in Ireland and Wales, and for some three years an invasion of the South Coast was a constant menace. Then, when Trafalgar had ensured, at least for several years, the security of these islands, the general outlook suddenly became blacker than ever: Pitt and Fox followed Nelson to the grave; a series of stunning victories, Ulm, Austerlitz, Friedland and Jena, procured for Napoleon the Peace of Tilsit; and we were left to continue the struggle alone. The analogies between our own situation and that of our ancestors at the beginning of the last century are frequent, often entertaining, and sometimes encouraging. A dictator of genius and boundless ambition had captured the loyalty of the best organised nation in Europe, and would evidently retain it so long as his successes continued; he had agents and supporters in all the countries he conquered, but a number of his own compatriots were hostile to him and lived in England, quarrelling among themselves but friendly to our cause; blockade and counter-blockade, however inconvenient, were unlikely to force a decision; our expeditionary forces had been successively expelled from the Continent, and the prospects of further and more prosperous assaults seemed poor; the volunteers waiting here to repel invasion were numerous and ardent, but ill-equipped; and even if invasion were not attempted, we feared for our possessions in the East, until a Russian winter struck the Grand Army and sent the dictator reeling toward calamity.

To compile a book displaying such analogies was an excellent scheme, and I looked forward to reading *Britain Against Napoleon*, by Carola Oman (Faber, 12s. 6d.). Miss Oman is at once an experienced novelist and the daughter of an historian: Clio should have been present at her christening. But her book disappoints. For one thing, she has succumbed to the fashionable vice of "popular" biographers and historians—an indiscriminating use of irony. Brilliantly, if not always fairly, employed by Lytton Strachey on particular occasions, irony can easily, in less exquisite hands, become a pest. Miss Oman avoids the grossest forms of irony, but her tone irritates by its superiority. One purpose of a writer about the figures of the past should be to make them real, but this way of writing dwindles them into pigmy puppets. Open Miss Oman's book at random, and you will quickly fall on some such passage as this:

> About the same time that Mr. Walter Scott in Edinburgh was rapturously re-reading the *billet-doux* of "C.C.," and Mr. John Constable, at Ipswich, was packing his London introductions and his landscape sketches (mostly of the Dedham neighbourhood), a strong travelling carriage was rapidly bearing a party of French military officers over the Alps.

We are thus constantly and deliberately shown the personages as it were through the wrong end of an opera-glass. A similar trick favoured by Miss Oman is to tell us about the doings of "an Engineer Officer," "a well-known Academician" or "an elderly gentleman," and only several pages later, if then, to reveal the identity of the character. Not being an historian, I cannot tell how far Miss Oman's accuracy is superior to her style, though it is odd to say that all Wordsworth's memories of France were painful. *The Prelude* contains much remembered happiness—"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, And to be young was very heaven." The book aims, no doubt, at being "popular," but even the uninstructed reader, if Miss Oman succeeds in interesting him, may like to be told of the diaries, correspondences, etc., upon which she has drawn. But there are no references, not even a short bibliography. Does Miss Oman think the reading public so weakly and degenerate that even a list of authorities would frighten it away?

Her book, nevertheless, does contain much that is interesting. There are descriptions of the French landings in Mayo and at Fishguard, of the fashionable English dashing to Paris after the Peace of Amiens, of the invasion-camp near Boulogne—Napoleon lived in an elegant pavilion surrounded by a garden complete with ornamental water and black swans, of the rafts propelled by windmills that he was expected to employ, of the signposts at Amiens marked "To England," of our precautions against invasion, martello-towers, semaphores and fencibles, of nervousness upon the coast and the resulting ruin to the lodging-house keepers of Eastbourne, of Lady Jerningham's plea for enrolling the women of Norfolk in the militia, of our plans for "scorching the earth," of the fishermen off Dover hearing the salvos that announced the birth of the Roi de Rome, of the badness of our ships (the best, I believe, were those captured from the French), of the pamphlets we distributed in France attacking the regime, even of the war's repercussions on the India of Hickey and Lord Wellesley. (His name reminds me of a curious fact not, I think, very generally known: there was a rich but loutish American called Patterson, whose sister and widow married respectively brothers of Napoleon and of Wellington.) Miss Oman describes the delicacy with which we allowed through the blockade seeds for Josephine's garden at Malmaison, but says nothing of the cross-channel travel that continued through the hostilities—Mme. d'Arblay and her adolescent son, for instance, both French citizens, were permitted in 1812 to sail from Dunkirk and to land at Deal. We are told about the description in *The Antiquary* of a false alarm of invasion, but I recommend the much more amusing and detailed account of a similar incident in Hardy's *Trumpet-Major*. Despite a silly plot, this novel provides an unsurpassed picture of rural England during the French wars—the regulars camping on the cliffs, the volunteers, the beacons, and, after the false alarm, the women fleeing from the coast in farm-carts.

Miss Oman finds space for a long account of the frequently described "infant Roscius," but she has little to say about two features that I should have thought especially interesting and apposite. First, the life in England of the refugees, especially the enemy aliens well affected to our cause. Yet the material for this is fascinating—the memoirs, for instance, of Mme. de la Tour du Pin, Mme. de Boigne and our own Mme. d'Arblay. Miss Oman mentions the arrival here of the Dutch royalties and the presence of Lewis the Eighteenth at Hartwell, but nothing about Talleyrand in England or the Orleans princes or Mme. de Staël. Secondly, there are the English who opposed the war. I like Lord Holland too well to believe him a potential Quisling, though I fancy that if Napoleon had captured London Lady Holland would have given a party in his honour. But the attitude of Holland, Whitbread, Burdett, and above all Hazlitt, was surely worth a mention. There were many such Englishmen—Byron was another—who much preferred Napoleon to the Bourbons and Habsburgs, for Napoleon's New Order was not merely a propagandist myth. He entertained no nonsense about racial superiority; and his armies brought an enlightened legal code to the countries they occupied. The Italians, in particular, save at Venice and in the monstrously ill-governed Papal states, were used to foreign rule; and, except for the Venetians and the *lazzaroni* of Naples, they at first, for the most part, preferred Napoleon to his predecessors. Then he proved not more despotic but more efficiently despotic, and conscription made them desire the return of their King Logs. Until Napoleon made himself Emperor he had valuable allies in the intellectuals of Europe. Already it had been one of his major follies to alienate the intellectuals of France. The most ignoble of great men, he suffered from the typical dictator's inability to tolerate criticism or to admit any greatness save his own. He banished Mme. de Staël, imposed a stringent censorship, married a Habsburg and antagonised his own Fifth Column throughout Europe.

In the French Wars our unpreparedness, our slowness and, despite a Nelson and a Wellington, our incompetence were not less conspicuous than they have been in the two German Wars. And then also we were preserved through straits that seemed desperate by what you can call, at your choice, lack of imagination or simple fortitude.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

ABBEY MEMORIES

Curtain Up. An autobiography. By LENNOX ROBINSON. *Michael Joseph.* 10s. 6d.

In *Three Homes*, Mr. Lennox Robinson, his brother and his sister wrote a delightful account of their childhood in County Cork; now the dramatist continues his own story alone. It is an account of his friendships and his career, the kind of story that is difficult to tell in exactly the right tone. How easily the autobiographer, at this stage, rises to a trying note of effusive complacency or rattles off the catalogue without intimacy. But Mr. Lennox Robinson writes simply, naturally and with an engaging touch of idleness. When he can think of nothing else to say he inserts an essay he wrote about a Rugger match; when he cannot recover an old emotion, he puts in a thing like an article he wrote at the time on the death of Roger Casement; and where the tale of the Abbey Theatre's tours reaches that tedium which seems to afflict reminiscences of the theatre more than any other kind, he puts in one or two of his short ghost stories and some odd ghosts of his own. One of these, *A Pair of Muddy Shoes*, is brilliant. The book strays along, slight, diffident, personal; but hard and clear with an experience which he nevertheless does not ram down your throat. One had always the interesting impression at the Abbey that this languid and serpentine personality, with its caressing manners and its startled look, knew exactly what it was doing. About Yeats and Lady Gregory, too, one felt the same. A refreshing common sense possessed the directors of the Abbey Theatre and their producer. The young seedlings of the new Irish drama came up, were potted, re-potted, planted out, watched, warmed and watered by apparently distrait but actually expert hands.

Yeats, who was shrewd, must have spotted a resolute quality in Mr. Lennox Robinson's work when he called the unknown playwright to Dublin at the age of 23 and gave him the job of producer at once, though he had no knowledge of the theatre whatever. He was sent immediately to London to watch Shaw and Granville Barker at work; and then, after that short course, he was hauled back to Dublin to make good. Mr. Robinson's luck was extraordinary. A dramatist must learn in the theatre, and he was given a theatre to learn in. The same practical, realistic genius seems to have been at work all over Ireland at that period, from the organisation of Sinn Fein to the work of Sir Horace Plunkett and A.E. in agriculture. The period seems to have been one of those rare ones in Irish history—it has gone already—when the intellectuals found men of practice, and imagination to use them. Mr. Robinson's first period at the Abbey ended with the turbulent American tour. There was as much trouble about the new Irish realism in America as there was in Ireland; in America the sentimental sons of tearful Mother Macree couldn't bear to see this new picture of the country they had never seen; just as in Ireland itself a powerful section of the priesthood could not bear the disappearance of the holy legend. The Abbey turned out to be more powerful than this older Catholic faction; but, later on, when Mr. Robinson was starting provincial libraries in Ireland and engaging in farcical adventures with local committees, the older clergy defeated him. They got him turned out because he had written and published a fanciful short story on a religious theme, a pious story which would have got him ostracised by the anti-clericals in France. In Spain they would probably have shot him! Sooner or later, in every Irish autobiography, one comes across some episode like this Carnegie row of Mr. Lennox Robinson's, which exposes the beefy, fanatic coarseness of the middling Irish mind—the mind which celebrated its freedom by establishing the censorship.

This ill wind did a lot of good to Mr. Robinson. It gave him more time to write plays; and after the empty houses of the early months of the Civil War, the Theatre and the drama began to rise again. Those who knew the Abbey in those days and who think not in terms of Maire O'Neill and Arthur Sinclair, but of Sara Allgood, Maurene Delaney, McCormick, Carolan and Barry Fitzgerald (who always seem to me to have retained a native quality which the former lost in England) will read Mr. Lennox Robinson's memoirs with sentiment and pleasure. Apart from the uncommon run of provincial talent, there were playwrights like T. C. Murray (whose merits as a tragic writer have never been well enough known in England) and Sean O'Casey straight from the hob. There was an erratic but stimulating variety in that rich repertoire. I remember sitting with three or four people only—the whole audience—on my first visit during "the troubles," at a performance which began with *The Countess Cathleen*—that rather chilly and arty little masterpiece—and ended with the rough house of *Blanco Posnet*. It was always one of the occasional pleasures of the Abbey, even in its most popular, affluent and respectable period, that a priest up from the country would arise in the stalls and cry out "Blasphemy! Blasphemy!" or there would be a restiveness among the diehards at the back when *The Plough and the Stars* came on. A living theatre! The Abbey lived both sides of the footlights.

Mr. Robinson has a great deal that is interesting to say about acting and play-writing which playwrights especially will find helpful to read. He has many amusing stories. The one about the lady who, hearing the bagpipes for the first time, said that it was only by the blessing of God that they didn't smell as well, takes the prize. But the most instructive story is one which deals with the delicate question of author's and actor's rights over the lines of a play:

> Many years ago at the Abbey I produced a serious play called *David Mahony*. Briefly, the subject is that of a widowed mother with a harum-scarum son. She is honest and hardworking and rather drearily virtuous trying to keep the little farm going; he is an attractive broth-of-a-boy, not vicious but not a village saint. In the end of the play he reforms and is about to go to America to start a new and virtuous life. Suddenly, unexpectedly, in a short touching scene of noble sacrifice, she determines to sell the little farm and house and travel to the States with him and share his life. It is a most moving finale to the play. At least it should have been. But Philip Guiry—a beautiful actor—playing the part of the ne'er do well gave one look at his lugubrious mother, a look of despair, a trapped look, a punctured look, and that look made the play end in a gale of laughter.

It became a successful comedy. Mr. Robinson has a higher view of Yeats as a dramatist than is commonly found; and, I must say, after reading his detailed analysis of *The Countess Cathleen*, that the case is a very strong one when one studies the final revision of this very much revised play. Yeats, as Mr. Robinson says, learned in the theatre, just as he made the young dramatists learn there. But it appears to me that the ardent heat of that verbal imagination seemed fatally tepid when transferred to human beings on the stage. It was fatal to *see* the Countess Cathleen refusing to sell her soul in her Celtic nightgown.

V. S. PRITCHETT

SHOTS IN THE NIGHT

The Darkest Hour. By LEO LANIA. *Gollancz. 8s. 6d.*

Mr. Lania is an Austrian, a well-known newspaper correspondent who left Germany in 1934 and lived in France until 1940, when he escaped to America. This book is an account of his trials and adventures from just before the beginning of the war up to the time, when in Portugal, he boarded an America-bound liner in August, 1940. The story is representative, I suppose, of what happened to thousands of refugees: it differs only in its ending, for the author was one of the few lucky enough to get away.

Mr. Edgar Mowrer recommends the book to us by asserting that "better than anything else I have read it illustrates why the French fought so feebly." This form of recommendation, if it is meant to sell the book, is perhaps an act of friendship rather than a serious statement. For *The Darkest Hour* is not that kind of book at all. It is straight reporting, and the long central section doubles what we have already heard from Mr. Koestler in *Scum of the Earth*—an account of the French prison camps for refugees. Mr. Lania is extremely fair to the French, but it remains a nasty story. All the same there is a saturation point in one's response to descriptions of squalor, misery, and misfortune. There was a time when one could read successive accounts of Nazi concentration camps, and still react violently. But then a long gap became necessary before the dulled nerves responded fully once again. Now, further brutalised, they refuse to do more than twinge at a second recording of Mr. Koestler's theme. So that, for me, two-thirds of *The Darkest Hour*, tellingly written though it is, missed its mark.

The book becomes exciting at the point where the Germans broke through in 1940. The refugees were then in a camp south of Paris. The authorities with a reasonable consideration decided to move them to the unquestioned safety of Brittany, and there, in due course, they arrived. It was unpleasant (though not entirely inexplicable) that they should be greeted with a shower of stones from the local inhabitants. It was a good deal worse than unpleasant as the news of the French collapse and the German occupation seeped through. Many of the refugees knew that they were high on the Gestapo list; some of them had already experienced Dachau or Buchenwald. Pinned in by French machine guns, they awaited the arrival of the motorised divisions.

This situation is itself a tremendous subject, which, properly treated, might have distilled for us the whole of the experience. The trouble is that the reporter's method is quite inadequate to handle it. In the years just before the war, we tried to dignify that method by calling it *reportage*; it was a form of writing peculiarly suited, we said, to the life of our times, etc. (One explanation of this error may be that, in a time of suspended animation which ought to have been a time of action, we turned to accounts of activity as a form of release.) But now that Everybody's Doing It, the reports are becoming somewhat tedious, for the fact is that the form is quite unable to touch the dramatic viscera of a situation.

The concluding third of *The Darkest Hour* describes Mr. Lania's escape first from the camp and then from the occupied to the unoccupied zone, and finally through Spain to Portugal. It is an exciting story graphically narrated. Mr. Lania has done, he tells us, some cinema scripts, and his book bears traces of this. The escape is a sequence in real life, just as cinema technique provides his opening—the camera's eyes and ears pick up shots from a street corner, a restaurant, a fashionable dinner party, the workers' quarter, with snatches of well-caught dialogue. This part, like the final escape, has the surface glitter, the variety, the movement of a slick film, genre *So Ends our Night*. How much better a film (or book) lies beneath the surface of the single shot where the refugees in their Breton camp await the enemy who is to them a double enemy, while the well-meaning commandant runs up the Red Cross, as though *that* would keep carnivores from their meat.

T. C. WORSLEY

THE SOVIET SCENE

Soviet Asia. By E. S. BATES. *Cape. 8s. 6d.*

Russia Fights On. By MAURICE HINDUS. *Collins. 8s. 6d.*

Mr. Bates, who has written a book called *Touring in* 1600, continues his *Voyage autour de ma Chambre* in the Soviet East. His present book about books on Soviet Asia is marked by wrong emphasis and inaccuracies which reduce its value even as a bibliographical guide. A two-page map shows the Trans-Siberian Railway as the Chinese Eastern Railway. He says of the Magnitogorsk-Kuznetsk industrial axis: "It is best known under the name of the Kuznetsk . . ." which is like saying that the London Midland and Scottish Railway is known as the London Railway. With a boldness unjustified by experience or knowledge, Mr. Bates makes dashing but untenable generalisations. He writes, for example: "Anyone who owned more than his neighbours automatically qualified for becoming a kulak. . . ." Kulak is an opprobrious but technical and official term used to describe Soviet peasants who employed hired labour and traded privately during the NEP period and the early years of collectivisation. Mr. Bates's references to the Ogpu ("The English public also came to the rescue . . . by buying Ogpu slave-made goods under falsified trade marks") are such that I feel grateful to him for not referring to the Bolsheviks as Bolshies. The style of the writing is reminiscent of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's.

He writes: "Nothing has recently been added to our knowledge of the present and future of this venture differing from what is known of its past, that is, that production has been greatly increased with all the advantages and disadvantages accruing in such a case."

While Mr. Bates writes of Russia with two fingers held, metaphorically, to his nose, Mr. Hindus writes as one who has literally smelt and enjoyed the smell of the Russian soil and the sweat of its workers. He has seen with his own eyes the peaceful growth of the Soviet State and the loving care and tears both of suffering and joy with which the Soviet people reared it. He has seen the material benefits which its successful development brought to millions of Russians, and the social benefits which its national policy has given to its many peoples and the various layers of Soviet society. Mr. Hindus states fairly the opposition to the Party line in various stages of the Union's development, the retrenchment of progressive social measures to accelerate war preparations, and strikes a reasonable balance between the Leftists who charge Stalin with betraying the Revolution, and the Rightists who wish to adopt Stalin as the Vansittart of Russia leading a nationalist campaign against Germany.

Mr. Hindus's book is lacking, however, in one important respect. He fails to do justice to the powerful organisational and political discipline of the Communist Party which preserved more than anything the cohesion of the Russian army and people in retreat. Hamlet could more easily be played without the Prince than the Red Army fight without the political lead of the Communists.

MAURICE EDELMAN

WORLD OF BIRDS

World of Birds. By ERIC PARKER. *Longmans.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

Shearwaters. By R. M. LOCKLEY. *Dent.* 15*s.*

No doubt there are many enthusiasts who still botanise as ardently as ever, but I suspect that birds are overtaking flowers in popular affection. Certainly the literature of ornithology has increased greatly in recent years. Birds have the advantage, from the common student's point of view, of a quasi-personal life: they can be credited, whimsically or otherwise, with some degree of thought and feeling. They are aesthetically delightful in three categories, sound, movement and visual appearance; and the study of them has the dignity of an accredited science which is nevertheless intelligible to anybody. The owner of a suburban bird-bath and the expert with his leg-rings and card-indexes talk a sufficiently similar language.

Much of this new literature consists of identification-guides, miscellaneous photographs and reminiscences, the usual chat among devotees of a hobby, and as such requires little comment; but the two books under review stand out as first-rate of their kind and deserve more than passing notice. Eric Parker is one of the most celebrated of living naturalists. R. M. Lockley has made a unique study of certain sea-birds. Their contribution to our knowledge of birds is substantial and authoritative.

The difference in their approaches is roughly that between a specialist and a general practitioner. Mr. Parker is a journalist, accustomed to range over the whole field of enquiry. He belongs to the miscellaneous tradition of Gilbert White and to a similar locality. In *World of Birds* he discusses many subjects, collating evidence and adding a well-informed and penetrating commentary. From his long association with *The Field* and his broadcast talks, Mr. Parker has become a clearing-house for correspondence from a host of observers. His sifting and piecing together of these fugitive reports, in the light of his own extensive knowledge, is valuable work supplementary to the concentrated and specialised studies of Mr. Lockley.

The Manx Shearwater is a sea-bird which nests in a few places round our coasts. John Kearton claimed it for Lundy in 1930 (though Mr. Lockley probably disputes this) but its principal breeding-centre appears to be Skokholm, an island off the Welsh coast. Mr. Lockley lived on Skokholm for about ten years prior to the outbreak of war, and he thus had a unique opportunity to study these birds. To opportunity he added perseverance and skill; the result is likely to remain the definitive work on its subject.

Both authors put forward challenging ideas. Mr. Parker contradicts the cherished assumption that the "drummings" of woodpecker and snipe are produced respectively by the pecking of the woodpecker and the vibrating feathers of the snipe. He argues that the sounds are vocal, and the development of this argument will delight anyone who appreciates the most precisely scrupulous conduct of a case. Holding what looks at first to be a reckless heresy, Mr. Parker certainly devastates the traditional evidence in the case of the woodpecker. I suggest that a physicist could solve this problem by experiment. The fact that Mr. Parker, striking a dead woodpecker's beak against wood could not produce the agreed volume of sound is not conclusive since it omits the factor of velocity of impact. This is governed on the one hand by the muscular power of the bird's neck muscles, on the other by the resistance of the wood to penetration: and it should be possible to define these limits. I should add that I do not expect such an experiment to disprove Mr. Parker's contention, which seems to me to be as plausible as it is unorthodox. In commenting on the comparative scarcity of greenfinches in Surrey, a fact that has puzzled me also, Mr. Parker asks if they are still common in Hertfordshire. With the hope that it is not Careless Talk, I will reveal that they are: as readily noticeable as almost any bird.

Mr. Lockley has dispelled a lot of vague speculation about an unfamiliar bird. His patient and conscientious study of the Manx Shearwater is a model of exact research. He inspected nests regularly, identified individual birds by ringing, kept thorough records, and tested his evidence with unrelaxing caution. Probably his most important discoveries are in the method and duration of incubation, and in the bewildering problem of migration. He discovered that the birds travelled as far as the Bay of Biscay coastline *when feeding during incubation* (i.e., not merely on an annual migration). He also discovered that Manx Shearwaters sent from Skokholm to a geographical area which their kind had never visited (e.g. Venice and Switzerland) were able to return without delay to their nests. This seems to destroy the mechanical, visual and habit theories of migration and thus revives what is for many people the most fascinating of all bird problems. I confidently recommend both *World of Birds* and *Shearwaters* to anyone who can find pleasure in the sight of a goldfinch or the pattern of a closely reasoned argument.

DESMOND HAWKINS

FAMILY HISTORY

Happy World. By MARY CARBERY. *Longmans,* 12*s.* 6*d.*

A House that was Loved. By KATHARINE KENYON. *Methuen.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

Martha's Vineyard. By DIONIS RIGGS. *Lane.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

WHEN Mary, Lady Carbery, was a "schoolroom person, not yet sixteen," she met Wilfrid Blunt, "as beautiful to behold as a dream poet." He came, driving his arabs, to dine and sleep at Bertram Currie's house at Coombe, where she was staying. After dinner, at which the talk was chiefly of "real or supposed grievances in different countries," Blunt accepted an invitation from the elder of the Currie boys to visit his rooms in a tower lately added to the house, partly to carry a water-cistern, but more to satisfy Grevy, the chef, who had demanded a new kitchen because the chefs of Monsieur Baring and Lord Wolferton, wealthy bankers like Currie and his neighbours in Coombe Wood, had "mocked themselves at his inferior accommodation." Here the talk was of poetry. Zak Currie told Blunt about his young cousin Mary's love for old ballads. "He asked me what I felt about this one and that, and what made me begin to care about them. He quoted Sir Philip Sidney's words about Chevy Chase, and then he repeated *Sir Patrick Spens.* 'The present tense,' he said, 'adds to the effect, and takes us straight into the tower and the King's presence.'" It may be that the use of the present tense in *Happy World* had something to do with my feeling, as I read it, that I was being taken straight into the Victorian scene of Lady Carbery's childhood, and into the actual presence of the variegated crowd of people who appear in it—grandparents, parents, sisters, brothers, cousins, nurses, governesses, cooks, footmen, grooms, Hertfordshire country folk, shopkeepers in St. Albans, distinguished guests at Coombe, prominent among them Mr. Gladstone, Matthew Arnold, and Lord Acton. But not so much, I think, as the fact that Lady Carbery began the story of her childhood when she was twelve, and was still in direct contact with the things described in it. She admits in the foreword that the story has now been retold, but claims that "the original lines have been followed, and the child's outlook

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on life retained." She has indeed been able to identify herself in the present so closely with herself in the past that there are very few passages it is inconceivable that a child could have written. The adult pen has been perfectly subdued to the childish material it is working in.

During that memorable visit to Coombe when Lady Carbery (then Mary Toulmin) met Wilfrid Blunt, and was taken into dinner by Mr. Gladstone—" he gave me his arm without any patronising airs such as lesser men put on with children " —Laurence Currie, who was about her age, and her most intimate friend, proposed teaching her Euclid. " It's what you need," he said, " it's the cure for what's wrong with your brain—imagination and all that. Euclid is so real that no-one can see anything in it that isn't there." The paradisiacal picture of Mary's Victorian environment in *Happy World* does not suggest to me that she saw something in it which was not there, but it does suggest that she saw what was there in the alchemic light her sunshiny disposition radiated. This is not to question that she had blessings and advantages denied to many children in Victorian times. Her stories of her father, her mother and her Nanny prove that she was tenderly and intelligently brought up. " We are never whipped or slapped, partly because we are good children and partly because Nanny thinks punishments do more harm than good. She has so much sense. If one of us shows signs of being vexed she looks for a reason. . . . She treats the youngest baby with respect, talking sense to it in words, and not with nums and did-ems, as common nurses talk. . . . She knows the names of flowers and grasses and the songs of birds." One of many tributes to Papa is that " he speaks kindly about people, and will not hear anyone unkindly spoken of." As for Mama, " she is our safety and our happiness and all the world to us."

I was entranced by this lovely book from the first page to the last. It was a new experience to read descriptions of a child's life which bear no trace of retrospection, are never " sicklied o'er with the pale cast " of adult thought. A great deal of valuable information can be picked up from them about the way of life of a well-to-do county family in the mid-Victorian age.

A House That Was Loved is a family history too, but of a very different kind. Miss Kenyon starts with some personal recollections of the house in Shropshire where her great-grandparents settled at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to help the reader to visualise it, and then proceeds to relate their history, mingling with facts ascertained from letters and diaries speculations which she takes great pains to prove well-founded. What more likely, as the Ladies of Llangollen were on terms of friendship with the Kenyons, than that they should have been consulted about the lay-out of the garden? They had made their own garden on the hillside above the Dee and spent many hours working in it. It is known that they were among the many visitors the Kenyons entertained.

> On first becoming familiar with the period it was strange to realise what constant intercourse was kept up by families living in the country. A diary of Emma's, Thomas's youngest daughter, reads as though it were the days of motoring, so frequent were the comings and goings, and so far the distance covered.

The annals of Thomas Kenyon, a son of the Kenyon who was Lord Chief Justice at the end of the eighteenth century, have not yielded much to his descendant that is distinctive. His way of life was like that of hundreds of English country gentlemen in the first half of the nineteenth century, and there was nothing remarkable about him except his skill as a whip. Driving-tours in his dark-blue coach drawn by a perfectly matched team of chestnuts of " right good blood " were one of the family's many pastimes. The social unrest of the period before the Reform Bill was passed did not worry them much until some Denbighshire miners marched into Oswestry to demand an increase of wages. And then Thomas knew how to deal with them. " I am happy to say we had no occasion to call upon the Yeomanry or Artillery."

As a brilliant actor in a minor part often romps away with the chief honours of the performance, so does Harriet Pigott, who makes a brief appearance in Miss Kenyon's book, score a triumph over the leading characters, who have long scenes. The chapter in which her letters to Charlotte Kenyon from France, during the Hundred Days, are freely quoted is the high spot of the narrative. Miss Kenyon disparages Harriet's epistolary style as " unbelievably florid," but what an eye the woman had. Nothing seems to have escaped it. Not the red rims round the eyes of the Duchess d'Angoulême, which spoilt her looks. Not the profusion of gold cord, tassels and buttons on Madame de Talleyrand's scarlet Cachemire pelisse.

I thought the title *Martha's Vineyard* must have some symbolic significance until I opened the book and discovered that the author has called it after a little island off the coast of Nantucket, once an important whaling centre and now a summer resort. She tells the story of her grandmother, who came to the island in 1852 as the bride of a young whaling captain she had met in Honolulu. His mother treated her with such brutality that when he went off on another voyage she begged him to take her with him. The description of their life aboard a whaler for five years shows that Mrs. Riggs has gone to a great deal of trouble to authenticate every detail. In later times her grandmother settled down in Martha's Vineyard with the two children she had born during the long voyage, and let her husband go to sea without her. But the portrait of her from the family album suggests that the trials of her early married life left their mark. It is difficult to associate that sour, embittered face with Mary Carlin, the attractive young Irish girl from Sydney described in the first chapters.

CHRISTOPHER ST. JOHN

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Prelude to Misadventure. By VIOLET TREFUSIS. *Hutchinson.* 10s. 6d.

The jacket of this book may lead some readers to expect one more of those exquisitely naive collections of gossip from the Cap d'Antibes and the Lido—what dearest Serge said about Fulco to Princess Jane, why darling Elsa was so cross with Elsie and Johnny at poor Laura's. Such readers will be disappointed. Mrs. Trefusis is indeed a little ingenuous about politics—she admired Mussolini and believes that his "felonies" began only after his association with Hitler. But her memoirs are concerned with interesting persons, such as Reynaud, Colette, Cocteau and the Comtesse de Noailles, all of whom she knew well. Her chief fault is to be too continuously witty. She has lived for twenty years in France; she evidently thinks more naturally in French than in her native tongue. She quotes Valéry's dictum, " Perfection can only be obtained by the elimination of all that tends to over-emphasis," yet in her style, as dazzling and flower-bedecked as Queen Mary's toques, she remains incorrigibly English. She has written three novels in French, two in English, and she displays a novelist's skill in portraying physique and character. She has travelled all over Europe, and she is remarkably sensitive to the genius of place. How vivid are her accounts of a country house in Roumania, of the

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SHOULD WE
STOP
CRITICISING?

PICTURE POST wishes to thank the many readers who have written to us on this subject, and the various newspapers and organisations which have shown their practical interest.

Owing to wartime printing arrangements it has been impossible to continue this discussion in the current issue, which had to go to press before any comment could be included. A full report will be given in the issue which comes out on Wednesday next, February 11th.

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Chimay Castle in Belgium, of that "skimpy, genteel, frightened room" packed with Art Nouveau brass—the Tsaritza's boudoir at Tsarskoie Selo. Her sense of fun is as acute as her eye for period. Her country house on the road from Paris to Sézanne is now occupied by Germans, but she writes of it with humour as well as with nostalgia. She liked Reynaud, and gives an excellent account of his disastrous friend:

> Mme. la Légitime was passionate, unsubtle, addicted to violence. So was Hélene de Portes. In fact, as I could not help remarking to their willing victim: "You have two wives but no mistress. . . ." Mme. de Portes was quite incapable of missing the vast political designs which have since been imputed to her. She was not only a bourgeoise, but a *toute petite* bourgeoise, the shrill *caissière*, whose universe is bounded by her own "boutique," and who is not really interested in anything but the rival shop opposite.

Mussolini, she decided after an unusually long interview with him, spoke of France "as a lover speaks of his faithless mistress. Only jilted love would speak as he spoke."

One of the best things in the book is a sketch of an Austrian Countess met on the Orient Express: Mrs. Trefusis, who has something of Paul Morand both in style and subject-matter, has a fine eye for the comicality of Central and Eastern Europe. These are the memoirs of a privileged person in a world that has vanished. Too often such persons were unworthy of their good fortune. Mrs. Trefusis had the wits to enjoy herself immensely, and now makes us share her enjoyment. Reading her book is like being back in Paris at a dinner-party where the talk is as lavish as the food.

R. M.

Canada. By B. K. SANDWELL. *Oxford Press. 2s. 6d.*

The American national tradition is founded in part on the achievement of independence in opposition to Great Britain; the Canadian national tradition in the achievement of independence in association with Great Britain. Canadian nationalism instinctively looks outward towards Britain and Europe as well as inward towards Canada and the North American Continent. The distinction is fundamental and has its consequences in foreign affairs. The Americans take some two years to think strategically and to see a major European war not as an occasion for charitably "pulling British chestnuts out of the fire," but as a threat to their own existence. The Canadians sign on the dotted line and sense the menace of a dominated Europe as quickly as the people of the United Kingdom. The flag-waving imperialist in Britain regards this Canadian response as a demonstration of empire unity. In a measure he is right, but essentially Canadian participation in European wars is a North American participation; it is a prediction that other American peoples will eventually take a similar course of action.

Mr. Sandwell's able summary describes the forces that shape Canadian life and give that life a character different from either Britain or the United States. He tends, perhaps, to dwell too long upon Constitutional questions, but that, in its way, is a very Canadian habit. His treatment of the French-Canadian is discerning and sympathetic. Neither the collapse of France, the homeland, nor the alliance with Russia, the bogy, weakened whole-hearted French-Canadian participation in the war or unity with their English-Canadian partners.

Week-end Competitions

No. 627

Set by Roger Marvell

A first prize of two guineas and a second prize of half a guinea are offered for the best sonnet in dialogue between two old lovers meeting after many years.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Monday, February 16.

2. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 624

Set by Saint-Loup

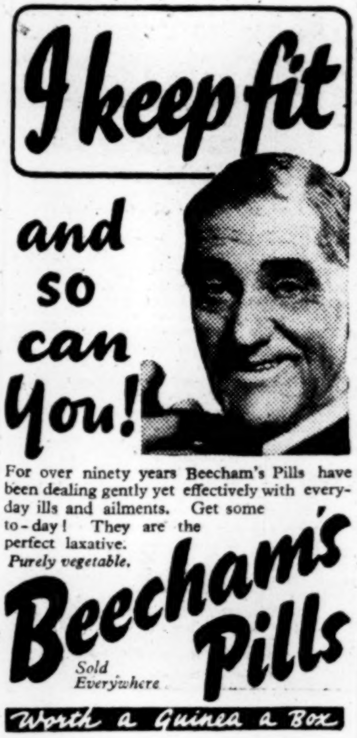
When asked to spell a name on the telephone, the established references, "A for apple," etc., sometimes give way to apter words—"D for Deaf, A for Ass," etc. The usual prizes are offered for the best congeries of such spelling references for the name of any well-known person or place. No grammatical construction is needed, and competitors are asked not to concentrate upon vituperation and to remember the laws of libel.

Report by Saint-Loup

The setter rather than the entrants should be blamed when a competition gives disappointing results. It is with shame, therefore, that I admit the failure of competitors to scintillate. Too generally they assembled a uniform collection of laudatory or abusive epithets. W. H. G. Price did make something even of this method: *Then*, R for Rotten, U for Uncivilised, S for Sabotage, S for Slavery, I for Inefficiency, A for Anarchy. *Now*, R for Resolution, U for Unity, S for Stamina, S for Solidarity, I for Invincibility, A for Achievement. Very few entries contained any element of surprise, and while there was much ingenuity, subtlety was very rare. If out of the nine letters in Churchill one had been given to a fault instead of to a virtue, the resulting portraits would have been more lively. Of competitors who chose to be grammatical the best were Joan Greenall: S for Sailing, H for Hazardously, E for Ended, L for Lyrist's, L for Life, E for Extremely and Y for Young. And Frank G. Crabbe: C for Can, E for Easily, M for Manage, J for Jump, O for Over, A for Any, D for Difficulty. R. M. Lang is lively: H for Haematocytozoon, U for Uintatherium, X for Xanthochroism, L for Leucocytogenesis, E for Ergatandromorph, Y for Yolk-epithelemium. Towanbucket sent three brains trustees and three "literary places"; the best being T for Teugh-an'-tasty, H for Hoots! R for Roup, U for Unco, M for Manse, S for Snod; and S for Shakespeare, T for Town, R for Racket, A for American, T for Tourist, F for Function, O for Oratory, R for Rolls-Royce, D for Dust. Leslie Johnson sent the best of many Singapores: S for Supposed, I for Impregnability, N for Nullified, G for Gutted, A for Aerodromes, P for Prestige, O for Outworn, R for Recriminations and E for Excuses; and Xerxes showed a touch of fancy: G for German, O for Onocentaur, E for Ebullient, B for Bravado, B for Bellicose, E for Exaggeration, L for Lame, S for Sez-you. Two competitors sent a savoury chestnut, one of them omitting to make clear that it was not original: E for Enery, A Wot 'Orses Eat, L Where Yer Goes to, I Wot Yer Sees Wiv, N Wot Lays a Negg, G Whizz. (This, alas, does not qualify for a prize.) The entry I like best comes from Kenneth Bloomfield:

. . . please Désireé . . . what? no, not du Maurier. . . . Oh lord, no! *not* at the Astoria . . . no, V for Venture, I for Illicit, C for Circumspection, T for Train, O for Ozone, R for Reception-desk, I for Incognito, A for . . .

I think that this deserves a guinea, and that the rest of the prize money should be doled out as consolation prizes among all the competitors whose attempts I have quoted.



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